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THE

# BIRTH-DAY;

## A POEM,

IN THREE PARTS.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

## OCCASIONAL VERSES.

BY

CAROLINE BOWLES,

AUTHOR OF ELLEN FITZARTHUR, THE WIDOW'S TALE, SOLITARY HOURS, CHAPTERS ON CHURCHYARDS, TALES OF THE FACTORY, ETC.

NEW YORK:
WILEY AND PUTNAM, 161 BROADWAY.

1845.

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Sept 27, 1927
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Samuel E. Morison

By Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz South

TO THE

MEMORY OF THE DEAD

I CONSECRATE

THESE

RECOLLECTIONS;

TO THE

INDULGENCE OF THE LIVING

I COMMEND THEM.

C. B.

BUCKLAND, 24TH MAY, 1836.

# CONTENTS.


PAGE

THE BIRTH-DAY.

Part the First, . . . . . 1
Part the Second, . . . . . 29
Part the Third, . . . . . 65

OCCASIONAL VERSES.

The Churchyard, . . . . . 105
The Death of the Flowers, . . . . . 107
The Spell of Music, . . . . . 108
To Death, . . . . . 109
When shall we meet again? . . . . . 111
To the Memory of Isabel Southey, . . . . . 113
"Aura Veni," . . . . . 115
The Dying Mother to her Infant, . . . . . 117
To the Sweet-scented Cyclamen, . . . . . 120
The Treaty, . . . . . 125
The Last Journey, . . . . . 127
Once upon a Time, . . . . . 130
Little Leonard's "Good-night," . . . . . 133
Departure, . . . . . 135
"How Swift is a Glance of the Mind!" . . . . . 137
The Pauper's Death-bed, . . . . . 139
To My Old Canary, . . . . . 141
To Little Mary, . . . . . 147
The Hedgehog, . . . . . 150
To My Little Cousin, with her first bonnet, . . . . . 153
On the Removal of some Family Portraits, . . . . . 155
Our Old House Clock, . . . . . 159
The Child's Unbelief, . . . . . 168
The Legend of Santarem, . . . . . 171
The River, . . . . . 176
To the Lady-bird, . . . . . 178

# PART THE FIRST.

CONTENTS.

The Sixth of December.—The Family Circle.—The Old Nurse.—The First Sorrow.—Education.—Poetic Aspirations.—Drawing.—The Landscape.—Parental Hopes.—Cutting Out.—Dolls.—Needle-work.—Fairy Sports.—The First Writing Lesson.—Solitary Childhood.—The Garden.—Spring.

# THE BIRTH-DAY.

## PART THE FIRST.

Dark gloomy day of Winter's darkest month!
Scarce through the lowering sky your dawning light
In one pale wat'ry streak breaks feebly forth.
No sunbeam through that congregated mass
Of heavy rolling clouds will pierce to-day.
Beams of the cheering Sun! I court ye not:—
Best with the sadden'd temper of my soul
Accords the pensive stillness Nature wears;
For Mem'ry, with a serious reckoning, now
Is busy with the past—with other years,
When the return of this, my natal day,
Brought gladness to warm hearts that loved me well.
As way-worn Pilgrim on the last hill top
Lingers awhile, and, leaning on his staff,
Looks back upon the pleasant plain o'erpast,
Retracing far with retrospective eye
The course of every little glancing stream,
And winding valley path, late hurried o'er
Perchance, with careless unobservant eye,
Fix'd on some distant point, of fairer promise—
As with long pause the highest summit gained,
(Dividing, like the Tyrolean ridge,

Summer from Winter) that wayfaring Man
Leans on his staff, and looks a long farewell
To all the lovely land: So linger I
(Life's lonely Pilgrim!) on the last hill top,
With thoughtful, tender, retrospective gaze,
Ere turning, down the deep descent I go,
Of the cold shadowy side.
Fair sunbright scene!—
(Not sunny all—ah! no)—I love to dwell,
Seeking repose and rest, on that green track,
Your farthest verge, along whose primrose path
Danced happy Childhood, hand in hand with Joy,
And dove-eyed Innocence,—(unwaken'd yet
Their younger sister Hope)—while flowers sprang up
Printing the fairy footsteps as they pass'd.
Return, ye golden hours! old times! return:
Even ye, ye simple pleasures, I invoke,
With rose hues tinting life's delightful dawn!
Yes—I invoke ye, dear departed days!
I call ye from the land of shadows back
(Mellow'd by softening Time, but not obscured;)
Distinct in twilight beauty, such as steals
(Like grey robed Vestal in some pageant's train)
With slow advance on sunset's crimson wake.

Come in your mellow'd hues, long vanish'd years!
Come in your soften'd outline, passing slow
O'er the charm'd mirror, as I gaze entranced—
There first I see, when struggling into life,
Dawn'd the first ray of infant consciousness;
There first I see, a tender, watchful group,
Hailing delightfully that token faint.
Two Parents then (inestimable wealth!)
*Two Parents me,* their only darling, bless'd:

And one—the good, the gentle, the beloved!—
My Mother's Mother. Still methinks I see
Her gracious countenance: The unruffled brow,
The soft blue eye, the still carnation'd cheek
Unwrinkled yet, though sixty passing years
Of light and shade—(Ah! deeply shaded some)—
Had streak'd with silvery grey her tresses fair.
Even now methinks that placid smile I see,
That kindly beam'd on all, but chief on me,
Her age's darling! Nor of hers alone:
One yet surviving in a green old age,
*Her Mother* lived; and when I saw the light,
Rejoicing hail'd her daughter's daughter's child.

Nor from that kindred, patriarchal group
Be thou excluded, long tried, humble friend!
Old faithful Servant! Sole survivor now
Of those beloved, for whom thine aged hands
The last sad service tremblingly perform'd,
That closed their eyes, and for the long, long sleep,
Array'd them in the vestments of the grave.
Yes—THOU survivest still to tend and watch
Me, the sad orphan of thy Master's house!
My cradle hast thou rock'd; with patient love
(Love all enduring, all indulgent) borne
My childhood's wayward fancies, that from thee
Never rebuke or frown encounter'd cold.

* * * * * *

Come nearer.—Let me rest my cheek even now
On thy dear shoulder, printed with a mark
Indelible, of suffering borne for me:
Fruit of contagious contact long endured,
When on that pillow lay my infant head
For days and nights, a helpless dying weight,

So thought by all; as almost all but thee
Shrank from the little victim of a scourge
Yet uncontroll'd by Jenner's heaven taught hand.
And with my growth has grown the debt of love;
For many a day beside my restless bed,
In later years, thy station hast thou kept,
Watching my slumbers; or with fondest wiles
Soothing the fretful, fev'rish hour of pain:
And when at last, with languid frame I rose,
Feeble as infancy, what hand like thine,
With such a skilful gentleness, perform'd
The handmaid's office?—tenderly, as when
A helpless babe, thou oft had'st robed me thus.
Oh! the vast debt.—Yet to my grateful heart
Not burdensome, not irksome to repay:
For small requital dost thou claim, dear Nurse!
Only to know thy fondly lavish'd cares
Have sometimes power to cheer and comfort me:
Then in thy face reflected, beams the light,
The unwonted gladness, that irradiates mine.
Long mayst thou sit as now, invited oft,
Beside my winter fire, with busy hands
And polished needles, knitting the warm wool;
Or resting with meek reverence from thy work,
When from *that Book*, that blessed Book! I read
The words of Truth and Life,—thy hope and mine.

There shalt thou oft (Time's faithful chronicler!)
Tell o'er to my unwearied ear old tales
Of days and things that were—and are no more.
Yes—thou shalt tell, with what a noble air,
On wedding, or on christ'ning festival,
The portly form of my Granduncle moved;
*In what fair waving* folds, the snowy lawn,

Border'd with costly point, redundant flow'd
Beneath his goodly amplitude of chin;
And how magnificent in rich brocade,
And broider'd rose-buds, and rough woven gold,
Half down his thigh the long flapp'd waistcoat fell.
A comely raiment! that might put to shame
The shrunken garb of these degenerate days.
Then shall I hear enumeration proud
Of female glories: silks that "stood on end!"
Tabbies and damasks, and rich Paduasoys,
And flowing sacks, and full trimm'd negligees,
And petticoats whose gorgeous panoply
(Stiffen'd with whalebone ribs the circuit vast)
With independent grandeur stood sublime.

Describe again, while I attend well pleased,
That ancient manor of my Norman race,
In all its feudal greatness: In *thy* time,
Of simple girlhood, to thy wondering mind,
Still most magnificent; nor yet forsaken
By the "old family." The ancient gateway
Surmounted by heraldic sculpture proud;
The round tower dovecote with its thousand holes
(Seignorial right, with jealous care maintain'd),
And my Great Grandam with her stately presence
(I mind it well) among her Maidens throned
At the eternal tapestry. I smile;—
But more, good sooth! in sadness than in mirth.
I've seen the ancient gateway where it stands
An isolated arch. The noble trees
(A triple avenue), its proud approach,
Gone as they ne'er had been; the dovecote tower
A desecrated ruin; the old house——

Dear Nurse! full fain am I to weep with thee
The faded glories of "the good old time."

Return, digressive Fancy! Maiden mild
Of the dark dreamy eye, pale Memory!
Uphold again the glass, reflecting late
My happy self in happy childhood's dawn,
By that dear guardian group encircled close.

Already changed!—Already clouded o'er
With the Death shadow that fair morning sky—
The kindred band is broken. One goes hence,
The very aged. Follows soon, too soon,
Another most endeared, the next in age.
Then fell from childhood's eyes the earliest tears
Shed for Man's penal doom. Unconscious half,
Incomprehensive of the awful truth;
But flowing faster, when I look'd around
And saw that others wept; and faster still,
When clinging round my Nurse's neck, with face
Half buried there, to hide the bursting grief,
I heard her tell how in the churchyard cold,
In the dark pit, the form I loved was laid.

Bitter exceedingly the passionate grief
That wrings to agony the infant heart;
The *first* sharp sorrow:—Ay—the breaking up
Of that deep fountain, never to be sealed,
Till we with time close up the great account.
But that first outbreak, by its own excess
Exhausted soon; exhausting the young powers:
The quiv'ring lip relaxes into smiles,
As soothing slumber, softly stealing on;
*Less and less* frequent comes the swelling sob,

Till like a summer breeze it dies away;
While on the silken eyelash, and the cheek
Flush'd into crimson, hang the large round drops—
Well I remember, from that storm of grief
Diverted soon, with what sensations new
Of female vanity—(inherent sin!)
I saw myself arrayed in mourning frock,
And long crape sash——Oh! many a riper grief
Forgets itself as soon, before a glass
Reflecting the becomingness of weeds.

Soon came the days when fond parental care
'Gan mingle easy tasks with childish play.
Right welcome lessons! conn'd with willing mind:
For it was told me, by such labour won,
And exercise of patience, I should gain
Access to countless treasures hid in books.
"What! shall I read myself, and *when I will*,
All those fine stories Jane can tell sometimes
When she's good natured?—but not half so well—
—Oh! no—not half, as Cousin Marianne.
What! shall I read about the sea of glass
The lady walk'd on to the ivory hill?
And all about those children at the well
That met the fairy, and the toads, and frogs,
And diamonds; and about the talking bird,
And dancing water, and the singing bough,
And Princess Fairstar? Shall I read all that,
And more, and *when I will*, in printed books?
Oh! let me learn."—And never student's brain
Fagging for college prize, or straining hard
(In prospect of tremendous little go)
To fetch up Time's leeway in idlesse lost,
Applied *with such* intensity as mine.

And soon attained, and sweet the fruit I reap'd,
Oh! never ending, ever new delight!
Stream swelling still to meet the eager lip!
Receiving as it flows fresh gushing rills
From hidden sources, purer, more profound.
Parents! dear Parents! if the latent powers
Call'd into action by your early cares
(God's blessing on them!) had attained no more
Than that acquaintance with His written will,
Your first most pious purpose to instil,
How could I e'er acquit me of a debt
Might bankrupt Gratitude? If scant my stores
Of human learning;—to my mother-tongues
(A twofold heritage) wellnigh confined
My skill in languages;—if adverse Fate—
(Heathenish phrase!)—if *Providence* has fixed
Barriers impassable 'cross many a path
Anticipation with her Hope-wing'd feet,
Youthfully buoyant, all undoubting trod;—
If in the mind's infirmity, erewhile,
Thoughts that are almost murmurs whisper low
Stinging comparisons, suggestions sad,
Of what I *am*, and what I *might have* been—
This Earth, so wide and glorious! I fast bound
(A human lichen!) to one narrow spot—
A sickly, worthless weed! Such brave bright spirits,
Starring this nether sphere, and I—lone wretch!
Cut off from oral intercourse with all—
"The day far spent," and oh! how little known;—
The night at hand—alas! and nothing done;—
And neither "word, nor knowledge, nor device,
Nor wisdom, in the grave whereto I go."
* * * * * *
*When thoughts* like these arise; permitted tests

Proving my frailty—and thy mercy, Lord!
Let but thy ministering angel draw mine eyes
To yonder *Book;* and lo! this troublous world
Fades from before me like a morning mist;
And in a spirit, *not* mine own, I cry
"Perish all knowledge, but what leads to thee!"

And, was it chance, or thy prevailing taste,
Beloved instructress! that selected first
(Part of my daily task) a portion short,
Culled from thy "Seasons," Thomson?—Happy choice,
Howe'er directed, happy choice for me;
For as I read, new thoughts, new images
Thrill'd through my heart, with undefined delight,
Awakening so th' incipient elements
Of tastes and sympathies, that with my life
Have grown and strengthened; often on its course,
Yea—on its darkest moments, shedding soft
That rich warm glow they only can impart;
A sensibility to Nature's charms
That seems its living spirit to infuse
(A breathing soul) in things inanimate;
To hold communion with the stirring air,
The breath of flowers, the ever shifting clouds,
The rustling leaves, the music of the stream,
To people Solitude with airy shapes,
And the dark hour, when Night and Silence reigns,
With immaterial forms of other worlds:
But best and noblest privilege! to feel
Pervading Nature's all-harmonious whole,
The Great Creator's presence, in his works.

Those happy evenings! when on seat high raised
By pond'rous folio, placed on cushioned chair

Close to the table drawn; with candles snuffed,
And outspread paper, and long pencil, shaved
To finest point (to my unpractised hand
Not trusted yet the sharply dangerous knife,
Like all forbidden things most coveted);
—Oh, blessful hour: when thus installed on high
In fulness of enjoyment, shapes uncouth,
Chaotic groups I traced.—The first attempt
Two crooked strokes, that nodding inward, prop
A fellow pair—a transverse parallel.
The *House* thus roofed; behold from either end
Tall chimneys twain sprout up like asses' ears,
From which, as from a fiery forge beneath
Ascend huge volumed smoke-wreaths to the sky.
Next, in the stately front, strokes—one—two—three;
There gaps the door, as wide as half the house,
And thick on either hand, come cross-barred squares
'Hight windows, that for number would tire out
The patience of that keenly prying wight
The tax collector; while from one, be sure,
Looks out some favourite form of absent friend,
Whose house that goodly fabric represents.
Close on each side, two poles surmounted high
By full round wigs, assume the name of trees;
And up the road (that widens farthest off,
In brave contempt of stiff perspective rule)
Comes coach and six, containing—who *but me*
And *all* my friends, to visit that fine house!
Then follows man and horse—a gallant steed!
With legs, and mane, and tail, and all complete;
The rider so secure upon his back,
He need but stretch his legs, and touch the ground—
Thick flies the dust!—out flies the brandished whip!
*On, on they go*—and if they reach the house,

That horseman tall may take it on his palm,
As erst Glumdalclitch handled Gulliver—
And now a five-barred gate, and sundry pales,
And up aloft a flight of birds, so huge
They must be cranes at least, migrating hence:
Some cocks and hens before the door convened—
A dog and cat, and pig with curly tail,
And lo! the *Landscape* in all parts complete.

And never artist of the olden time,
Renowned Lorraine, or wonder-working Cuyp,
Or he, the mighty genius of the storm,
Sublime Salvator, on his masterpiece
Such looks of sweet complacency bestowed
As I on mine. And other eyes beheld,
As pleased, as partial; and parental hearts
From the bewildered and incongruous maze
Sweet inference drew of future excellence;
Saw combination in the motley whole,
Conceptions picturesque in crooked strokes,
And taste and genius manifest throughout.
Discernment keen! that with excursive eye
Pierces the dark dropped curtain (wisely dropped!)
That shrouds futurity. As he of old,
The fated Goth, in that Toledan cave
Saw shadowed out, "as in a glass revealed,"
Things uncreated yet, that were to be—
But he beheld the downfall of his hopes;
His line extinct, his empire overthrown.
Appalling vision! type of woes foredoomed—
Far fairer that, less faithfully fulfilled,
The pageant that in long perspective view
Reveals (undoubted) to a parent's eye
The *future glories* of his infant race—

He, while the fairy people round his chair
Holds its gay revel, from the mimic sport
Auspicious omen draws, and sage portent.

That fair, bold boy, with high undaunted brow,
And broad white chest and shoulders, who bestrides
His father's cane, a gallant war-horse feigned,
Himself the warlike rider; and with shout,
And brandish'd arm, and voice of proud command,
Marshals his legions; chairs and cushions ranged
In rank and file: and prances round the room
The valiant leader of that well-trained host;—
Is not the future hero manifest,
The laurelled victor, in that noble boy?
And he, with curly pate, and bright black eyes,
And dimpled mouth, of arch significance;
He ever ready with his "quips and cranks,"
And shifts, and windings, and keen subterfuge,
Detected misdemeanour to excuse,
Averting dextrous the suspended rod—
Already fancy hears that prating tongue,
Subtle, ingenious, disputatious, bold!
The organ of a future barrister;
Or round that chubby face, with prouder hope,
Adjusts an awful majesty of wig.
Lo! on that cushion, where he sits sublime,
(His woolsack now) the future Chancellor—
That gentle child, with pale transparent cheek,
And large mild eyes, by silken fringes veiled
(Clouds darkly shading their celestial blue),
That melt in dewy sadness, if he hears
Some moving tale; how "once two hapless babes
*Were left* alone to perish in a wood,
*And there in one* another's arms they died,

And Robin Redbreast covered them with leaves"—
That gentle child must be a man of peace—
He cannot brave the buffets of the world.
And yet—with all his meekness—who can tell?—
The boy may live to be a bishop yet.
And little Annie—what will Annie be?
The fair-haired prattler! she, with matron airs,
Who gravely lectures her rebellious doll—
"Annie will be papa's own darling child,
Dear papa's blessing." Ah! she tells thee truth:
The pretty mockbird with his borrowed notes,
Tells thee sweet truth. Already, is she not
Thy darling child? Thy blessing she will prove—
The duteous prop of thy declining years.
Thy sons will rove, as various fortune leads,
Haply successful in their several paths,
And, like thyself, in course of years, become
The careful fathers of a hopeful race;
Then will ambitious thoughts, and worldly cares
Engross their hearts, and haply steal from thee
A portion of thy former influence then—
But *she* will never change. That tender heart,
Though wedded love, and infant claimants dear,
May waken there new interests—new and sweet;
Thine in that loving heart will ne'er decrease—
'Tis rich in kind affections, and can give,
Ay, largely give, without despoiling thee—
Thou wilt partake her ever watchful cares—
Her husband, for her sake, will cherish thee;
Her children will be taught to honour thee;
And while they fondly swarm about thy chair,
Or climb thy knees, th' endearing witchery
Will half renew again *her* infant days—
It is not love that steals the heart from love;

'Tis the hard world, and its perplexing cares;
Its petrifying selfishness, its pride,
Its low ambition, and its paltry aims.

Those happy evenings! ay, 'twas there I left—
The landscape finished, young invention sought
(Not often baffled) springs of fresh delight,
And found them frequent, Goldsmith, in thy work
"Of Animated Nature"—precious book!
Illustrated with pictures, that to me
Rivalled at least the subjects they adorned—
Then with sharp scissors armed (a jealous loan
With many a solemn charge conceded slow),
And fair unwrinkled paper, soon began
The imitative labour: and anon
Wide o'er the table ranged a motley herd,
A heterogeneous multitude, before
Never assembled thus, since that old time
When Noah to the finished ark called in
Of every species the allotted pair.
There first the unwieldy elephant advanced,
Majestic beast! on whose stupendous bulk
Rajah or Sultan might have sat sublime;
Next in the line of march (ill-mated pair!)
With branching antlers, and slight flexile limbs,
Comes on the graceful dweller of the north;
He whose winged swiftness, like an arrow's flight,
Wafts the rude sledge, that bears o'er Lapland snows
The stinted native of those cheerless plains.
The Arab's faithful servant follows next,
The patient camel, useful to the last—
Who, when he sinks upon the burning sand
Beneath his burthen, slakes his master's thirst
*(Slain for its sake)* with the long-hoarded draught.

Then came the warrior bison, strong ally
Of his rude lord, grim guardian of his herds,
And sharer of his cabin comforts few.

Thus had I learnt of each brief history
From those illumined pages, to relate
(Too oft I fear to undelighted ears),
When with triumphant pleasure I displayed
The wonders of that paper menagerie—
But not as then, will I enumerate now,
From the grim lion to the timorous hare,
Each by his several title, name, and style—
Or notice, but with glancing mention brief,
Those higher aims of art, creating shapes
(Not likenesses of aught in Heaven or earth),
That with self-gratulating pride I called
Orlando and Rogero—names renowned!
And Bradamant, and fair Angelica—
For I had read with eager interest,
Half comprehending, that romantic tale.
And thine immortal Epic, sightless Bard!
In Pope's smooth verse revealed to ears unlearned,
Supplied a subject, that recalled, e'en now
Provokes me to a smile; so strange the choice;
That novel illustration so uncouth.
'Twas when forth issuing from the Cyclop's cave
The wily Ithacan Ulysses came,
Locked in the shaggy fleeces of the ram,
Behind his Centaur flock. Incongruous pairs!
Biped and quadruped together linked.
Ulysses never bound his trembling crew
More carefully beneath the guardian's fleece
Than I secured their paper effigies

To sheep, for height and bulk (proportions huge!)
Worthy, indeed, to be a giant's flock.

How vivid still, how deep the hues, th' imprint
Left by those childish pastimes! Later joys,
Less puerile, more exciting have I known
(Ah! purer none; from earth's alloy so free),
But Memory hoards no picture so distinct,
In freshness as of yesterday, as those
Life's first impressions, exquisite and strong—
Their stamp, compared to that of later days,
Like a proof print from the engraver's plate
The first struck off—most forcibly imprest.
Lo! what a train like Bluebeard's wives appear,
So many headless! half dismembered some,
With battered faces—eyeless—noseless—grim
With cracked enamel, and unsightly scars—
Some with bald pates, or hempen wigs unfrizzed,
And ghastly stumps, like Greenwich pensioners;
Others mere Torsos—arms, legs, heads, all gone!
But precious all. And chief that veteran doll,
She, from whose venerable face is worn
All prominence of feature: shining brown
(Like chestnut from its prickly coating freed)
With equal polish as the wigless skull—
Well I remember, with what bribery won
Of a fair rival—one of waxen mould
(Long coveted possession!) I was brought
The mutilated fav'rite to resign.
The blue-eyed fair one came—perfection's self!
With eager joy I clasped her waxen charms;
But then—the stipulated sacrifice!
"And must we part?" my piteous looks expressed—

(Mute eloquence!) "And *must* we part, dear Stump!"
"Oh! might I keep ye both!"—and both I kept.

Unwelcome hour I ween, that tied me down
Restless, reluctant, to the sempstress' task!
Sight horrible to me, th' allotted seam
Of stubborn irish, or more hateful length
Of handkerchief, with folded edge tacked down,
*All* to be hemmed; ay, *selvidge sides* and all.
And so they were in tedious course of time,
With stitches long and short, "cat's teeth" y'clept;
Or jumbled thick and thin, oblique, transverse,
At last, in sable line imprinted grim.
But less distasteful was the sampler's task;
There green and scarlet vied; and fancy claimed
Her privilege to crowd the canvass field
With hearts and zigzags, strawberries and leaves,
And many a quaint device; some moral verse,
Or Scripture text, enwrought; and, last of all,
Last, though not least, the self-pleased artist's name.

And yet, with more alacrity of will,
I fashioned various raiment; caps, cloaks, gowns;
Gay garments for the family of dolls;
No matter how they fitted—they were *made;*
Ay, and applauded, and rewarded too
With silver thimble. Precious gift! bestowed
By a kind aunt; one ever kind and good,
Mine early benefactress! Since approved
By time and trial mine unchanging friend;
Yet most endeared by the affecting bond
Of mutual sorrows, mutual sympathies.

Yet was that implement (the first possessed),

Proudly possessed indeed, but seldom worn.
Easier to me, and pleasanter, to poke,
As one should poke a skewer, the needle through
With thumb and finger, than in silver thrall
T' imprison the small tip, too tiny still
For smallest thimble ever made to fit.
Dear aunt! you should have sought in wizard lore
The name of some artificer, empowered
By royal patent of the Elfin Court
To make Mab's thimble—if the sprightly Queen
Ever indeed vouchsafes in regal sport,
With needle, from the eyelash of a fly,
Plucked sharp and shining, and fine cobweb-thread,
T' embroider her light scarf of gossamer.
Not oft I doubt; she better loves to rove
Where trembling harebells on the green hill side
Wave in their azure beauty; or to slide
On a slant sunbeam down the fragrant tube
Of honeysuckle or sweet columbine,
And sip luxurious the ambrosial feast
Stored there for nature's alchymist, the bee,
Then satiate, and at rest, to sleep secure,
Ev'n in that perfumed chamber, till the sun
Has ploughed with flaming wheels the Atlantic wave,
And the dark beetle, her mailed sentinel,
Winds his shrill signal to invite her forth.
Not on her waking hour such pomp attends,
As when on Ohio's banks magnolias tall
Embalm the dews of night, and living sparks
Glance through the leaves, and star the deep serene.
But even here, in our romantic isle,
The pearl of ocean, girdled with its foam!
Land of the rainbow! even here she loves
*The dewy freshness* of the silent hour,

Whose gentle waftings have their incense too,
To scatter in her paths; the faint perfume
Of dog-rose pale, or aromatic breath
Of purple wild thyme, clouding the green sward;
And though in air no sparkling myriads dart
Their glancing fires to light the Fairy Queen,
*Earth* hath her stars, a living emerald each!
And by the lustre of those dewy gems
She trips it deftly with her merry train
In mossy dells, around the time-scarred trunk
Of giant oak; or 'neath the witch-elm's shade,
Beside some deep dark pool, where one bright star
Trembles reflected; or in velvet meads,
Where, though the limpid blade of tender grass
Bends not beneath the "many-twinkling" feet,
Dark circles on the paler sward defined
Reveal at morning where the dance has been;
Oft thickly studded with a mushroom belt,
The fungus growth of one short summer's night,
The ring so geometrically drawn,
As if the gnomes with scientific skill
(Forming the fairy sports) had mimicked there
The circling rampart of a Celtic camp,
Or with more apt similitude designed
The Druid's holy ring of pale grey stones.
There oft the milkmaid, when with shining pail
She seeks the glistening pasture, finds dispersed
The relics of the banquet; leaves and flowers,
From golden kingcups cropped, and poplars white,
The cups and trenchers of the midnight feast.
Ah, lucky lass! when stirring with the lark,
On dairy charge intent, she thither hies
And finds her task forestalled—The cool tiled floor
Flooded, *fresh sluiced*; stool, shelf, and slab bright rubbed;

Scalded and sweet the glazy milk-pans all ;
And scoured to silver sheen the ready pail ;
And brighter still, within its circle left,
The glittering sixpence—industry's reward.

Me more delighted, in the fairy's haunts
To sport, like them an airy gleesome sprite,
Than, prisoner of an hour—e'en that too long,
The needle's task monotonous to ply.
But I have lived to prize the humble art,
To number with the happiest of my life
Those quiet evenings, when with busy hands
I plied the needle, listening as I wrought
(By that mechanical employ, more fixed
Attention apt to rove) to that dear voice
Which from some fav'rite author read aloud.
The voice is silent, and the task laid by—
Distasteful now, when silence, with a tongue
More audibly intelligent than speech,
For ever whispers round me, " She is gone."

A day to be remembered well was that,
When, by my father taught, I first essayed
The early rudiments of penmanship.
Long wished for lesson ! by prudential love
(Wisely considerate of my infant years)
Withheld, till granted slow in fair exchange
For some relinquished pleasure ; 'twas received
A twofold grant—a boon and a reward.
So I began—long rig'rously confined
To rows of sloping strokes. Not *sloping* all ;
At first in straggling piles they jostled rude,
*Like raw* recruits, till into order drilled,
*Maintaining equal* distance, on their march

Even and close they ranged like vet'ran troops,
In ranks symmetrical; and *then* at last
My long restrained ambition was indulged
In higher flights; with nicer art to shape
The involutions of the alphabet.
Unsteady and perplexed the first attempts—
Great A's, that with collossal strides encroached
On twice the space they should have occupied,
And I's like T's, and R's whose lower limbs
Beyond the upper bulged unseemly out;
And sprawling W's, and V's, and Y's,
Gaping prodigiously, like butter-boats.
But soon succeeded to those shapeless scrawls
Fair capitals, and neat round characters,
Ere long in words and sentences combined:
At first restrained between two guiding lines;
Then ranged on one—that one continued long,
Spite of ambitious daring, that would fain
Have strayed, from limit and restriction free;
For ardently I longed to scrawl at will
The teeming fancies of a busy brain;
Not half content, not satisfied, albeit
My father, with a kind and ready pen,
Vouchsafed assistance to the infant muse.

* * * * * * *

Smile, gentle Reader! (if so be, in sooth,
Reader shall e'er these simple records scan),
But not in mockery of supposed conceit
Proud of precocious genius. I too smile
In sad humility, experience-taught,
At thought of the young daring, by fond hearts
Built on exultingly. Alas! dear friends,
No heaven-born genius, as ye simply deemed,
*Stirred in my* childish heart the love of song;

'Twas feeling, finely organized perhaps
To keen perceptions of the beautiful,
The great in art or nature, sight or sound,
The working of a restless spirit, long
For every pastime cast upon itself—
(I was an only child, and never knew
The social pleasures of a schoolgirl's life).
All these, with other circumstance combined,
As those first lessons, from the books I named,
And rural occupations, tuned my soul
Aye (every trembling chord) to poesie.
Books were my playfellows, and trees and flowers,
And murmuring rivulets, and merry birds,
And painted insects, all were books to me,
And breathed a language, from the dawn of sense
Familiar to my heart: what marvel then
If, like an echo, wakened by the tone
Of Nature's music, faint response I made?
And so I stood beside my father's knee,
Dictating, while he wrote, wild rhapsodies
Of "vales and hills enamelled o'er with flowers,
Like those of Eden, white with fleecy flocks:"
Of "silver streams, by spring's warm breath unbound,
And winter past and gone."
Most simple themes,
Set to a few low notes monotonous,
Like the first chirping of a nestling bird,
Quavering uncertain! But parental hearts
Hailed them as heavenly music—to their ear
Prelusive of rich volumed harmonies.
Fond hopes! illusive as the march-fire's light;
Yet—*not* like that, in utter darkness quenched.
*Nature* in me hath still her worshipper,
*And in my soul her mighty spirit still*

Awakes sweet music, tones and symphonies
Struck by the master-hand from every chord.
But prodigal of feeling, she withholds
The glorious power to pour its fulness out;
And in mid-song I falter, faint at heart
With consciousness that every feeble note
But yields to the awakening harmony
A weak response—a trembling echo still.

Revive, dear healthful pastimes! active sports
Of childhood's enterprising age revive!
Elastic aye! untiring, unsubdued
By labour, disappointment, or fatigue.
Thy toil enjoyment;—thy defeated hope
The spur to fresh exertion—thy fatigue
The healthful anodyne that medicines thee
To renovating slumbers light and sweet.
Full oft I pause with reminiscent eye
Upon the little spot of border-ground
Once called "*my* garden." Proud accession that
To territorial right and power supreme!
To *right possessive*, the exclusive *mine*
So soon asserted, e'en by infant tongue.
Methinks the thick-sown parallels I see
Of thriving mustard, herb of rapid growth!
The only one whose magical increase
Keeps pace with young impatience, that expects
Ripe pulse to-morrow from seed sown to-day.
To-morrow and to-morrow passes on,
And still no vestige of th' incipient plant;
No longer to be borne, the third day's sun
Beholds the little fingers delving deep
T' unearth the buried seed; and up it comes
*Just swelling into* vegetable life;

Of which assured, into the mould again
'Tis stuck, *a little nearer to the top.*
Such was the process horticultural
I boldly practised in my new domain:
As little chance of rest, as little chance
To live and thrive had slip or cutting there;
Which failing in three days to sprout amain,
Was twitched impatient up, with curious eye
Examined; and if fibrous threads appeared,
With renovated hope replanted soon.

But thriving plants *were* there, tho' not of price.
No puny children of a foreign soil,
But hardy natives of our own dear earth,
From many a field and bank, and streamlet side
Transplanted careful, with the adhering mould.
The primrose, with her large indented leaves
And many blossoms pale, expanded there;
With wild anemone, and hyacinth,
And languid cowslip, lady of the mead,
And violets mingled hues of every sort,
Blue, white, and purple. The more fragrant white
Ev'n from that very root, in many a patch
Extended wide, still scents the garden round.
Maternal love received the childish gift,
A welcome offering, and the lowly flower
(A rustic stranger) bloomed with cultured sweets;
And still it shares their bed, encroaching oft
(So ignorance presumes) on worthier claims.
*She* spared it, in the tenderness of love,
Her child's first gift; and I, for her dear sake,
Who prized the pale intruder, spare it now.

*Loved occupations!* blameless, calm delights!

Your relish has not palled upon my sense;
I taste ye with as keen enjoyment still
As in my childish days; with zeal as warm,
More temperate, less impatient, still I tend
My flow'ry charge; with interest unimpair'd
Watching the tender germ and swelling bud;
Pruning the weak or too luxuriant shoot,
And timely propping with assiduous care
The slender stalks with heavy blossoms bowed.
I will not tell how lately and how oft
In dreams I've wandered 'mongst the blooming tribes,
Continuing thus in sleep the pleasing task,
My summer evening's toil; I will not tell
How lately, stealing forth on moonless night,
I've sought by lantern light the dewy buds
Of peeping larkspur, searching 'mong the leaves
For nightly spoilers, from the soft light earth
That issue forth to feed on the young plant,
Their fav'rite dainty. No—I will not tell,
Lest wisdom laugh to scorn such puerile cares
In age mature, how lately they've been mine.

The gladness! the unspeakable deep joy!
When Nature, putting off her russet stole
Of wintry sadness, decks herself afresh
In bloom and beauty, like a virgin bride.
With lovely coyness, shrinkingly she comes,
For oft in clouds, and mist, and arrowy sleet,
The sun, her bridegroom, veils his glorious face,
And on his setting hour too often hangs
The breath of ling'ring frosts, repelling long
All but the hardiest children of the spring.
Of these, the earliest pursuivants, appear

(Studding the brown earth with their golden stars)
The clust'ring aconites, a pigmy race,
Fearless of wintry blast, whose fiercest rage
Passes innocuous o'er their lowly bed.
But soon through every border the moist earth
Breaks up its even surface, every clod
Expands and heaves with vegetable life;
And tender cones of palest green appear,
The future hyacinths, and arrowy points
Of bolder crocus; and the bashful heads
Of snowdrops, trembling on their slender stalks;
And next, of many hues, hepaticas,
The red, the milk-white, and the lovelier blue
(A vegetable amethyst!) come forth,
Th' impatient blossoms bursting into sight
Before the tardier leaves; but those at length
Expand their outward circle, fencing round
With its broad fringe the tufted bloom within.
But Winter oft, tenacious of his sway,
Enviously lingers on the skirts of Spring,
Binds up in frozen chains the stubborn soil,
Nips the young leaf, and checks the tender germ.
In such ungenial seasons oft I've watched
Week after week, and shiver'd at the sight,
Beneath some shelving bank or garden wall
Long wreaths of snow that on the border mould
In drifted thickness heap'd, continuous lie.
Elsewhere divested of that livery pale
The cold Earth reassumes her natural hues,
And slow returning verdure: But in vain
To the stiff surface heave the tender heads
Of budding flowers; or if they struggle through,
*Deep in their shelt'ring* leaves conceal'd they lie.

At length succeeds a thaw—a rapid thaw,
And from the Heavens a dazzling Sun looks down,
Arousing Nature from her torpid thrall.
Yielding and moist becomes the dark'ning mould,
And from that snow-heap'd border melts away
The drifted wreath ;—it shrinks and disappears,
And lo ! as by enchantment, in its place
A rainbow streaks the ground—a flow'ry prism
Of crocus tribes innum'rous, to the Sun
Expanding wide their gold and purple stars.

A Christian moral (to the pious mind
All things present one) may be found e'en here.
Adversity, like that pale wreath of snow,
Falls on the youthful heart, a seeming load
Of deadly pressure, crushing its young hopes ;
But *seeming* such, for after certain space
Continuing there, and if it finds the soil
Not wholly sterile, to the frozen mass
Of its own latent virtues it imparts
A fertilizing warmth, that penetrates
The surface of obdurate worldliness.
Then from the barren waste (no longer such)
Upspring a thousand amaranthine flowers
" Whose fragrance smells to Heaven." Desires chastised,
Enlarged affections, tender charities,
Long suff'ring mercy, and the snowdrop buds
Of heavenly meekness—These, and thousands more
As beautiful, as kindly, are call'd forth,
Adversity ! beneath thy fost'ring shade.

# PART THE SECOND.

CONTENTS.

The Willow-tree.—The Swing.—The Old Parrot.—The Toad.—The Mechanic.—My Spaniel.—Juba.—Birds and Beasts.—Humanity.—Sensibility.—Sportsmen.—My Hare.—Old Ephraim.—Travelled Puppies.—Sympathy.—Conoscenti.

## PART THE SECOND.

Hard by that flourishing domain, that strip
Of border ground, my garden, late described,
On a grass plot by the house door there stood
An aged willow, whose long flexile boughs
With their light shadows chequered the green turf;
Beneath the sheltering arms of that old tree
Pastime (to me delightful) oft I found
On balanced seat, upborne by a strong limb
Selected for the trust with cautious care,
Anxious as his, who for an arctic voyage
Of unknown peril, far discovery,
Selects the timbers for some strong-ribbed bark:
Ev'n with like caution did my father choose
The transverse bough to which his hands made fast
With firmness doubly sure the swinging cords;
Committing to their strength a freight to him
More precious, than to Solomon of old
The yearly lading of his treasure ships
From Tarshish and from Ophir—Ay, than those
To the great Hebrew—than the wealth of worlds—
Far, far more precious to my father's heart
That bending bough's light weight—his only child.

Right pleasant pastime! the clear cutting air
To cleave with rapid motion, self-impelled—
*(For I was dext'rous* at the sport)—to sway

With pendulous slow motion, dying off
To scarce perceptible, until at last
Settling to perfect stillness: which, howe'er,
A breath, a finger's motion would disturb.
So 'twas my luxury to sit and dream,
Building in cloud-land many a castle fair,
Albeit no genii of the ring or lamp
Came at my bidding; in those dreamy moods
I conjured up as gorgeous palaces—
Gardens as dazzling bright with jewelled fruit
As e'er Aladdin's wondering eyes beheld,
And peopled them with living forms, to me
(Deep read in magic lore) familiar all.
Then the Commander of the Faithful strayed,
And dark Mesrour, and that devoted slave
Giaffer, the pearl of ministers, whose head
So lightly on his patient shoulders sat,
Ready to leave them headless, at a nod
From his most gracious master. Stately walked
Beside her mighty lord his jealous spouse,
Scornful Zobeide, their attendant slaves
Close following; the fair Noushatoul; and he
The Caliph's fav'rite, jester of the court,
Facetious Abon Hassan. Hunchback too,
And that loquacious Barber, and his train
Of luckless brethren, came at my command.
Then, with King Saladin and Queen Gulnare,
A car of pearl and coral bore me off
Through sub-marine dominions—overarched
With liquid chrysolite the billowy vault;
Or with the exiled brethren far I strayed,
Amgrad and Assad, or that happier prince
*Who found the hall* of statues, found and won
*That ninth, so far* surpassing all the rest.

Anon I ventured on a darker realm,
Peopled with awful shapes—magicians dire,
Happak and Ulin, and their hideous crew,
The Sultan Misnar's leagued inveterate foes.
How my heart beat, as in the dead of night
With him and his suspected slave I trod
Those rocky passages, hewn roughly out
In the earth's entrails! How I held my breath
(Expecting the result) when through the ring
The severed rope slid rapidly away!
How my young feelings sympathized with hers,
The duteous Una's, when on Tigris' banks
(A weeping orphan) she was left forlorn;
And when in urgent peril—hapless maid!
In that dark forest from her side she missed
The guardian peppercorns! But oh! the joy
When in the shaggy monarch of the woods,
A brave protector—brave and kind she found—
I saw her by his side—in his thick mane
I saw her small white fingers fondly twined;
Majestically gentle, at her feet
I saw the royal brute lie fawning down;
*I saw all this*—and murmured half aloud,
"Oh how I wish I had a lion too!"

Fantastic shadows! fearful! gay! grotesque!
Still with a child's delight I reperuse
The pages where ye live; recall ye still—
Ay—all your marv'llous annals—with as keen
And undiminished interest as of yore
When I convened ye at my sov'reign will
In that green bower beneath the willow-tree,

Where moments flew uncounted as I sat
With eyes half-closed, excluding outward things;
And as the spell within worked languidly,
Or kindled into action, truth, and life,
Slower or faster swung my airy car
(Not *quite* at rest, for that had broke the charm),
Unconscious I so tranced in waking dreams,
That mine own impulse checked or urged it on.

But I was not sole tenant of the tree,
Not then companionless: above my head
Among the thicker branches (there secure
From the swing's reach) our old grey parrot hung—
Poor Poll! we were in truth well-sorted mates.
Wert thou my prototype? or I in sooth
The shadow of thy graces and thy wit?
As Jacko in the fable proveth plain
That man (the servile copyist!) apes his.
Associates though we were in that green bower,
Yet little kindness, Poll! betwixt us grew;
For many an ancient grudge in either heart
Kept us asunder, and the hag Mistrust
Widened the unhealed wounds of former feuds.
Thou wert in truth th' aggressor in those feuds,
For, Poll! it ill became thy reverend years,
With spiteful vengeance of that hard sharp beak
The unsuspecting freedom to repulse
Of baby fondness, first encouraged too
By coaxing treach'ry—"Scratch poor Polly's head."
And when thy victim, smarting with the pain
Of that unkind reception, wept aloud,
*'Twas most ungenerous*, Poll! to flout and jeer,

And mock with imitative whine, and cry,
And peevish whimper, and convulsive sob,
Concluding all with boist'rous ha! ha! ha!

Then comments indiscreet of mutual friends
(Such oftenest the result) but served t' increase
And whet the growing animosity.
The frowning hearer, when I gabbled o'er
Some tedious lesson, not a word whereof
Informed my far-off senses; bade me note
How Poll as glibly ran *her* lesson o'er
Of words by her as little understood.
The mincing nursemaid, sedulous t' improve
The graces of her charge, reproached me oft
With turned-in toes—"for all the world like Poll."
And when my heart with rage rebellious swelled—
Alas! 'twas a rebellious little heart—
And angrily I stamped the tiny foot,
And screamed aloud, the bird screamed louder still;
And I was told to mark how even Poll
Despised and laughed to shame the naughty girl.

As babyhood's first lisping years wore on,
'Monitions such as these their influence lost,
And to the noisy mimic's flout and jeer
A careless, callous listener I became;
But distance due was still between us kept
With strict punctilio—an armed, neutral peace,
Never infringed by familiarity.
So there together in the willow-tree
Our several pastimes Poll and I pursued;
Some, much resembling still, for to and fro,
Exalted in her wiry globe, she swung,
*As if to mimic there* my sport below.

Thou wert the only creature, bird or beast,
Excluded from my lavish fondness, Poll!
Fowls of the air, and beasts, and creeping things,
Ay, reptiles—slimy creatures—all that breathed
The breath of life, found favour in my sight;
And strange disgust I've seen (*I* thought it strange)
Wrinkle their features who beheld me touch,
Handle, caress the creatures they abhorred;
Enchase my finger with the palmer-worm
Or caterpillar's green, cold, clammy ring,
Or touch the rough back of the spotted toad.
One of that species, for long after years,
Ev'n till of late, became my pensioner—
A monstrous creature!—It was wont to sit
Among the roots of an old scraggy shrub,
A huge Gum-Cystus: All the summer long
"Princess Hemjunah" (titled so by me
In honour of that royal spell-bound fair
So long compell'd in reptile state to crawl),
"Princess Hemjunah" there, from morn to eve,
Made her pavilion of the spicy shrub;
And they who look'd beneath it, scarce discern'd
That living clod from the surrounding mould
But by the lustre of two living gems
That from the reptile's forehead upward beam'd
Intelligent, with ever-wakeful gaze.
There daily on some fresh green leaf I spread
A luscious banquet for that uncouth guest—
Milk, cream, and sugar,—to the creature's taste
Right welcome offering, unrejected still.

When Autumn winds 'gan strew the crisped leaves
*Round that old Cystus*, to some lonelier haunt,
*Some dark* retreat the hermit Reptile crawl'd:

Belike some grotto, 'neath the hollow roots
Of ancient laurel or thick juniper,
Whose everlasting foliage darkly gleam'd
Through the bare branches of deciduous trees.
There, self-immured, the livelong winter through
Brooded unseen the solitary thing:
E'en when young Spring with violet-printed steps
Brush'd the white hoar-frost from her morning path,
The creature stirr'd not from its secret cell:
But on some balmy morn of rip'ning June,
Some morn of perfect summer, waken'd up
With choirs of music pour'd from every bush,
Dews dropping incense from th' unfolding leaves
Of half-blown roses, and the gentle South
Exhaling, blending, and diffusing sweets—
Then was I sure on some such morn to find
My Princess crouch'd in her accustom'd form
Beneath the Cystus.
So for many years
—Ay—as I said, till late she came and went,
And came again when summer suns return'd—
All knew and spared the creature for my sake,
Not without comment on the strange caprice
Protecting such deform'd, detested thing.
But in a luckless hour—an autumn morn,
About the time when my poor Toad withdrew
(Annually punctual) to her winter house;
The axe and pruning-knife were set at work—
—(Ah! uncle Philip! with unsparing zeal
You urged them on) to lop the straggling boughs
Whose rank luxuriance from the parent stem
Drain'd for their useless growth too large supply;
Branch after branch condemn'd fell thickly round,
*Till, moderate* reform intended first,

(Nice task to fix the boundary!) edged on,
Encroaching still to radical; and soon
Uncheck'd the devastating fury raged,
And shoots, and boughs, and limbs bestrew'd the ground,
And all denuded and exposed—sad sight!
The mangled trees held out their ghastly stumps.

Spring reappear'd, and trees and shrubs put forth
Their budding leaves, and e'en those mangled trunks
(Though later) felt the vegetable life
Mount in their swelling sap, and all around
The recently dismember'd parts, peep'd out—
Pink tender shoots disparting into green,
And bursting forth at last, with rapid growth,
In full redundance—healthful, vig'rous, thick;
And June return'd with all her breathing sweets,
Her op'ning roses and soft southern gales;
And music pour'd from every bending spray;
E'en the old mangled Cystus bloom'd once more,
But my poor Princess never came again.
More beauteous graceful pensioners were those
(But not more harmless) on the gravel walk
Before our parlour-window, from my hand
That peck'd their daily dole of scatter'd crumbs.
Welcome and safe was each confiding guest,
Though favour with a partial hand strew'd thick
The crumbled shower in Robin Redbreast's way;
But all were welcome,—Blackbirds, Thrushes, Wrens,
Finches, and chirping Sparrows.
How I hate
Those London Sparrows! Vile, pert, noisy things!
Whose ceaseless clamour at the window-sill
*(The back-room* window, op'ning on some mews)
***Reminds one of*** the country just so far

As to bemock its wild and blithesome sounds,
And press upon the heart our pent-up state
In the great Babylon ;—oppress'd, engulf'd
By crowds, and smoke, and vapour: Where one sees,
For laughing vales fair winding in the Sun,
And hill-tops gleaming in his golden light,
The dingy red of roofs and chimneys tall
On which a leaden Orb looks dimly down!
For limpid rills, the kennel's stream impure;
For primrose banks, the rifled scentless things
Tied up for sale, held out by venal hands;
For lowing herds and bleating flocks, the cries
Of noisy venders threading every key,
From base to treble, of discordant sound;
For trees, unnatural stinted mockeries
At windows, and on balconies stuck up
Fir-trees in vases! picturesque conceit!
Whereon, to represent the woodland choir,
Perch those sweet songsters of the sooty wing.
* . * * * * *
Yet as I write, the light and flippant mood
Changes to one of serious sadden'd thought,
And my heart smites me for the sorry jest,
Calling to mind a sight that fill'd me once
With tend'rest sympathy.

In a great city,
Blacken'd and deaf'ning with the smoke and din
Of forge and engine, Traffic's thriving mart,
Charter'd by Mammon; underneath a range
Of gorgeous show-rooms, where all precious metals,
In forms innumerous, exquisitely wrought,
Dazzled the gazer's eye, I visited
*The secret places* of the "Prison House"—

From den to den of a long file I passed
Of dingy workshops—each affording space
But for the sallow inmate and his tools:
His table, the broad, timeworn, blackened slab
Of a deep sunken window, whose dim panes
Tinged with a sickly hue the blessed beams
Of the bright noonday sun. I tarried long
In one of those sad cells, conversing free
With its pale occupant, a dark-browed man
Of hard repellant aspect—hard and stern.
But having watched awhile the curious sleight
Of his fine handicraft, when I expressed
Pleased admiration, in few words, but frank,
And toned by kindly feeling—for my heart
Yearned with deep sympathy—the moody man
Looked up into my face, and in that look
Flashed out an intellectual soul-fraught gleam
Of pleased surprise, that changed to mild and good
The harsh expression of that care-marred face.
There lay beside him on the window slab
A dirty ragged book turned downwards open
Where he had last been reading, from his toil
Snatching a hurried moment. Anxiously
I glanced towards it, but forbore to question,
Restrained by scrupulous feeling, shunning most
Shadow of disrespect to low estate—
But from the book my wandering gaze past on
To where, beyond it, close to the dim panes,
A broken flowerpot, with a string secured,
Contained a living treasure—a green clump
(Just bursting into bloom) of the field orchis.
"You care for flowers," I said, "and that fair thing,
*The beautiful* orchis, seems to flourish well
*With little light* and air."

"It won't for long,"
The man made answer, with a mournful smile
Eying the plant—"I took it up, poor thing!
But Sunday evening last from the rich meadow
Where thousands bloom so gay, and brought it here
To smell of the green fields for a few days
Till Sunday comes again—and rest mine eyes on,
When I look up fatigued from these dead gems
And yellow glittering gold."
With patient courtesy,
Well spoken, clear (no ignorant churl was he)
That poor artificer explained the process
Of his ingenious art—I looked and listened,
But with an aching heart that loathed the sight
Of those bright pebbles and that glittering ore;
And when I turned to go—not unexpressed
My feelings of good will and thankfulness—
He put into my hand a small square packet
Containing powder, that would quite restore
(He told me) to dull gems and clouded pearls
Their pristine lustre. I received, well pleased,
Proffering payment; but he shook his head,
Motioning back my hand; and stooping down
Resumed his task, in a low deep toned voice
Saying, "You're kindly welcome."
Gems and pearls
Abound not in my treasury; but there
I hoard with precious things the poor man's gift.

But what have I to do (distasteful theme!)
With towns and cities? thither unawares
Wild fancy wandered, but recalled as soon,
Wings back her way, and lights at home once more;
*Lights down amid* the furred and feathered court

That own'd my sov'reign sway—a motley train!
Rabbits and birds, and dormice, cats, and kittens,
And dogs of many a race—from ancient Di,
My father's faithful setter, to black Mungo
And mine own fav'rite spaniel—*most mine own.*

My poor old Chloe! gentle playfellow!
Most patient, most enduring was thy love;
To restless childhood's teasing fondness proof,
And its tormenting ingenuity.
Methinks I see thee in some corner stuck
In most unnatural posture, bold upright,
With rueful looks and drooping ears forlorn,
Thy two forepaws, to hold my father's cane
(Converted to a musket), cramped across.
Then wert thou posted like a sentinel
Till numbers ten were slowly counted o'er—
That welcome tenth! The signal sound to thee
Of penance done and liberty regained—
Down went the cane, and from thy corner forth,
With uproar wild and madly frolic joy
Bounding aloft, and wheeling round and round
With mirth-inviting antics, didst thou spring.
And the grave teacher (grave no longer) shared
The boist'rous pupil's loud unbridled glee;—
Then were there dismal outcries—shrill complaints—
From angry Jane, of frocks and petticoats
All grim with muddy stains and ghastly rents;—
"'Twas all in vain," the indignant damsel vowed,
"'Twas all in vain to toil for such a child—
For such a Tom-boy! Climbing up great trees—
Scrambling through brake and bush, and hedge and ditch,
*For paltry wild-flowers.* Always without gloves
*Grubbing the earth* up like a little pig

With her own nails, and (just as bad as *he*)
Racing and romping with that dirty beast."
Then followed serious,—"But the time will come
You'll be ashamed, Miss, of such vulgar ways:
You a young lady!—Not much like one now."
Too oft unmoved by the pathetic zeal
Of such remonstrance, pertly I replied,
"No, mistress Jane! that time will never come—
When I'm grown up I'll romp with Chloe still,
As I do now; and climb and scramble too
After sweet wild-flowers just as much as now;
And 'grub the earth,' and 'never put on gloves.'
Then if I dirt my hands and tear my frock,
You'll not dare scold when I'm a woman grown—
For who would mind your scolding, Mistress Jane?"

Alas, poor maid! an arduous task was thine;
A hopeless labour, recommencing still—
Like theirs, the unhappy sisters, doomed to pour
Eternal streams in jars that never fill.

Next in degree to the old faithful dog—
Next in my favouring fondness, Juba ranked.
Sprung of a race renowned, in Juba's veins
The mettled blood of noble coursers ran:
Foaled on my father's land, his sprightly youth
Sported, like mine, those pleasant meads among,
And when I saw him first, a new-born thing,
Tottering and trembling by the old mare's side
On his long slender limbs, I called him then,
And thenceforth he was called, "My little horse."
And soon those slender, flexile limbs were braced
With sinewy strength; and soon that feeble frame
*Expanded into* vig'rous, noble bulk—

From his broad swelling chest arched proudly up,
With graceful curve, the yet unbridled neck;
Free to the winds the flowing mane and tail,
In their wild beauty, streamed exuberant out,
Or lashed the glossy chestnut of his sides
With dark dishevelled flakes; and his small ears
With flexile beauty oft inverting quick
Their black-fringed edges; and those large bright eyes
Flashing with all the fire of youth, and joy,
And freedom uncontrolled! I see him now,
My gallant Juba, racing round the field
Fleet as the whirlwind;—with down arching neck,
Yet stately in its bend; and clattering hoofs;
And long back streaming tail. In mid career,
Self-checked and suddenly, he stops abrupt,
Back on his haunches, gathering proudly up
His bulk majestic; and with head flung back
Disdainfully aside, and eyes of flame,
And nostrils wide distended, firmly forth
He straightens one black, sinewy, slender limb,
The other gathered inward, touches scarce
The ground with its bent hoof. Then loud and clear
Echoes o'er hill and dale his long shrill neigh,
And e'er the sound expires, with snort and stamp
Away he starts, and scours the field again.—
But oft at sight of me—(full well he knew
His fairy mistress!)—oft at sight of me,
With whinnying welcome, and familiar eye,
Yet shyly curious, he came trotting up
Expectant, the accustomed feast to claim
(Apple or crust) that I was wont to bring.

I have not specified the creatures half,
*My sometime favourites.* Should I notice each,

Paper would fail, and patience be worn out
Of most indulgent reader. Such a throng!
Jackdaws and magpies—turtle doves and owls—
And squirrels, playful in captivity,
But still untamed. Most barb'rous to immure
The pretty sylvan in a small close cage;
Painful to watch the everlasting round
The restless prisoner circles all day long
Monotonous (sad mockery of mirth!)
Within his narrow limits. Wretched change
From the wild haunts, where erst, from tree to tree
He leaped and gambolled all the summer long,
The very life of liberty and joy.
Mine was an old maimed creature—maimed for life
By the vile treacherous snare; and happier since
(So I concluded) in its captive state
Of plenteous ease, than helplessly at large
Among its hardier fellows of the woods.
A very hospital, in truth, I kept
For such dumb patients, maimed, diseased, and old.
The squirrel just described (a veteran then)
Had just precedence; next in age and rank
Hopped an old bulfinch, of one leg bereft—
By what untoward accident, the bird
Brought no certificate. A sportsman once
(None o' th' keenest) brought me bleeding home
A wounded leveret—not quite hurt to death,
But sorely mangled. From its mother's side
Scarce could the little creature yet have strayed,
When all too well that fatal shot was aimed.
Perhaps that luckless morning was the first
Among the dewy herbs and tender grass
That the poor mother led her young one forth
*To taste the sweets* of life,—that sacred gift

Of its Almighty Maker! Was the boon
Bestowed to be abused in cruel sport
By Man, into whose nostrils the same power
Breathed with creating will the breath of life?
I know for Man's convenience and support,
Nay, for his luxuries, the inferior kinds
Must toil and bleed. But God, who gave so far
Dominion over them, extended not
The royal grant to torture or abuse:
And he who overtasks them, or inflicts
Protracted or unnecessary pain,
By far outstrips his warrant, and heaps up
On his own head for the great reck'ning day
Such measure as he metes withal to them,
Of tender mercy.

I would not devote
My person, as the pious Hindoo doth,
To banquet noxious vermin; nor engage
The patient carcass of some needy wretch
To make them pasture; nor abstain, like him,
From food of every kind that has contained
The living essence.—I despise and loathe
The affected whine of canting sentiment,
That loves to expatiate on its own fine frame
Of exquisite perception—nerve all o'er—
Too tremblingly alive for the mind's peace
To every shade of delicate distress.
Such sensitives there are, whose melting souls
Dissolve in tender pity, or flame out
With gen'rous indignation, if they see
A dog chastised, or noxious reptile crushed!—
*Does a fly tease* you, and with impulse quick
*Your dext'rous hand* destroys the buzzing pest—

Prepare ye for an eloquent appeal
On the sweet duties of humanity,
And all the tender charities we owe
To the poor, pretty, little, helpless things
"That float in æther." Then some hackneyed verse
(Your sensitive must doat on poetry)
She quotes to illustrate the touching theme—
How "the poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corp'ral sufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies." 'Tis odious thus
To hear the thing one venerates profaned
By sickly affectation: to my ear
Doubly distasteful, for I heard the words
First from her lips whose heart was pity's throne.
That voice maternal taught my infant tongue
To speak the sentence, and my youthful heart
To feel and cherish, while its pulses beat,
Mercy and kindness for all living things.

Go where you will, the sensitive finds out
Whereon t' expatiate largely; to pour forth
The flood of her pathetic eloquence:—
A plodding clown to market drives along
His swine obstreperous: right and left they run
In sheer perversity: so right and left
Resounds the whip, but scarcely reaches them,
Whate'er their horrid dissonance implies;
No matter—feeling's champion cannot hear
Unmoved the cry of innocence oppressed;
So forth she steps, and speaks, with hand on heart,
Tender remonstrance to the boor, who stands
Scratching his bushy pate—with hat pushed up,
And eyes and mouth distended with surprise,

Vented at last when the oration ends
In one expressive expletive—" Anan !"

A cart comes by—ah ! painful sight indeed,
For it conveys, bound fast with cruel cords,
To the red slaughter-house a bleating load
Of fleecy victims. Now th' impassioned soul
Of sensibility finds ample scope
T' excruciate its own feelings, and their hearts
Condemned to hear, while she minutely dwells
On things revolting—" how the murd'rous knife
Shall stop those bleating throats, and dye with gore
Those milk-white fleeces."
Thus expatiates she,
While feeling turns aside, and hurries on.

But vulgar suff'rings, 'mongst the vulgar part
Of our own species, often fail to excite
Those tender feelings that evap'rate half
O'er flies and earwigs, and expend themselves
In picturesque affliction.
" Ah !" cries one,
" How happy is the simple peasant's lot,
Exempt from polished life's heart-riving woes,
And elegant distresses !"
Bid them turn
(Those sentimental chymics, who extract
The essence of imaginary griefs
From overwrought refinement), bid them turn
To some poor cottage—not a bower of sweets
Where woodbines cluster o'er the neat warm thatch,
And mad Marias sing fantastic ditties,
But to some wretched hut, whose crazy walls,
*Crumbling with age* and dripping damps, scarce prop

The rotten roof, all verdant with decay;
Unlatch the door, those starting planks that ill
Keep out the wind and rain, and bid them look
At the *home-comforts* of the scene within.
There on the hearth a few fresh-gathered sticks,
Or smouldering sods, diffuse a feeble warmth,
Fann'd by that kneeling woman's lab'ring breath
Into a transient flame, o'erhanging which
Cowers close, with outspread palms, a haggard form,
But yesterday raised up from the sick-bed
Of wasting fever, yet to-night returned
From the resumption of his daily toil.
"Too hastily resumed—imprudent man!"
Ay, but his famish'd infants cried for bread;
So he went forth and strove, till nature failed,
And the faint dews of weakness gathered thick
In the dark hollows of his sallow cheek,
And round his white-parched lips. Then home he crawled
To the cold comforts of that cheerless hearth,
And of a meal whose dainties are set out
Invitingly—a cup of coarse black tea,
With milk unmingled, and a crust of bread.
No infant voices welcome his return
With joyous clamour, but the piteous wail,
"Father! I'm hungry—Father! give me bread!"
Salutes him from the little-huddled group
Beside that smoky flame, where one poor babe,
Shaking with ague-chills, creeps shuddering in
Between its mother's knees—that most forlorn,
Most wretched mother, with sad lullaby
Hushing the sickly infant at her breast,
Whose scanty nourishment yet drains her life.

**Martyrs of sensibility! look there!**

Relieve in acts of charity to those
Th' exuberance of your feelings.
"Ay, but those
Are horrid objects—squalid, filthy, low
Disgusting creatures—sentiment turns sick
In such an atmosphere at such a sight.
*True cottage children* are delightful things,
With rosy dimpled cheeks, and clustering curls;
It were an interesting task to dress
Such pretty creatures in straw cottage-bonnets
And green stuff gowns, with little bibs and aprons
So neat and nice! and every now and then
(When visitors attend the Sunday school)
To hear them say their catechism and creed.
But those!—Oh heaven! what feelings could endure
Approach or contact with those dirty things?
True—they *seem* starving; but 'tis also true
The parish sees to all those vulgar wants;
And when it does not, doubtless there must be
(Alas! too common in this wicked world)
Some artful imposition in the case."

Martyrs of sensibility! farewell!
I leave ye to your earwigs and your flies.
But, gentle sportsman! yet a word with you
Ere to the starting-point I come again
From this long ramble unpremeditate.
Your silvan sports you call most innocent,
Manly, and healthful. Are they always such?
Healthful I grant—for while the sons of sloth
Doze half their sleepy lives in morning dreams,
Ye are awake and stirring with the lark;
And like the lark ye meet on breezy hill,
*In dewy forest glade*, on perfumed heath

The breath of morning and her roseate smile.
Most healthful practice—and so far most pure.
But is it innocent, for murderous sport,
To scare sweet peace from her beloved haunts?
To sadden and deface with death the scene
Where all breathes life, and love, and harmony?
And is it manly, with assembled rout
Of horses, dogs, and men, to hunt to death
A poor defenceless, harmless, fearful wretch,
The panting hare? For life—for life she flies,
And turns, and winds, and doubles in her course
With art instinctive—unavailing all.
Now the wild heath, the open plain she tries;
Now scuds for refuge to the pleasant brake,
Where many a morning she was wont to sit
In her old form, all spangled round with dew;
No rest—no respite—danger presses near—
'Tis at her heels. They burst the thicket now,
Yet still she moves not—for she cannot move;
Stiffened with terror, motionless she sits
With eyes wide staring, whence (I've heard some say)
Large tears roll down, and on her panting sides
The soft fur wet with dews of agony.
Finish the picture ye who list—I turn
Disgusted from the task. But can I pass
Regardless the more lingering, torturing death
Too oft inflicted? We behold indeed
The furred and feather'd trophies of his skill,
Disgorged from that fell gulf, the sportsman's bag;
Not pleasing to *all* hearts, I trow, the sight
Of even that lifeless spoil. But could we see—
Ah! could we follow to their sad retreats
Those more unhappy that escape with life,
*But maimed* and bleeding. To the forest depths

They crawl or flutter; there with dabbled plumes
(All stiff with clotted gore their burnished gold)
The graceful pheasant cowers beneath some tree,
Whose pleasant branches he shall mount no more.
Down droops the shattered wing, and crimson drops
Mark where the shot has entered in his breast.
There are no surgeons 'mongst the woodland tribes
To set such fractures—no purveyors there
To cater for the wounded, helpless bird;
Nay, his own species, with unnatural hate
(As if, like some of humankind, they feared
Contagion from approach to misery),
Drive the poor sufferer from their gay resorts;
So to some lonely nook he creeps away
To starve and die—abandoned and unseen.

Such wretched fate my little hare's had been,
But he, whose erring shot performed but half
Its deadly mission, brought it gently home
To be my guest and plaything, if it lived;
And to my loving care its life was given.
I nursed it fondly, every want and wish
Promptly contenting. So I won at last
Its grateful confidence; but not like those,
Beloved of Cowper, did my hare abide
Long after years in pleased captivity.
Nature prevailed; and when the prickly furze
Girdled our meadow with its golden belt
Of od'rous blossoms; to that tempting brake,
Where harboured some of his own kind, my hare
Cast many a wistful look, as by my side
He leapt and frolicked in the garden near;
Yet long the powerful instinct he withstood
*Prompting to liberty*. Compunctious thought

Perhaps it was of gratitude to me
That kept him still a prisoner on parole.

How oft in human hearts such strife springs up
'Twixt inclination and the scrup'lous doubts
Of rigid conscience! Bold at first, we cry,
"Satan, avaunt!" to the seducing fiend,
And he retires; but seldom in despair.
Wise by experience, close at hand lurks he,
Watching the time through some unguarded chink
To slip into the "swept and garnished" hold
Of his old citadel. Perchance disguised
Like whispering Prudence—or in Feeling's mask—
Or Reason's pompous robe, he enters in.
Then Hesitation, with her shaking hand
And ever-shifting balance, weighs the cause;
And if a mote—a hair—a dust prepond
(No matter how it came there, or why left)
On Inclination's side, down drops the scale.

A cause less trivial fixed at last the fate
Of my poor Puss. One morning by my side
In that same garden well content she sat
Nibbling some fresh-picked dainty, when, behold!
With horrid bark, in bursts a stranger dog
(One who had never learnt respect for hares)
And scents the victim; but in vain, for they
Who follow close restrain his savage speed,
And Puss escapes, o'erleaps the shallow fence,
And scuds across the mead, and safely gains
That prickly covert, which beheld from far,
Had filled her heart with wand'ring wishes long.

*From that day forth* the hare (no longer mine)

Made her abode in that same hollow bank
Thick set with bushes, whence I saw her oft
Come forth at morn and even to sport and feed;
And oft the truant slave, the wild maroon,
With bold assurance leapt the garden fence
For purposes of plunder. Base return
For kind protection to her helpless state
So long accorded! nay, extended still
To shield her from the penalty of guilt;
For direful wrath in Ephraim's bosom rose
(The dragon he, whose guardianship had rule
Within the garden), when he found at morn
Traces yet recent of the plunderer's work.
His early lettuces all nibbled round,
And ranks of tender peas (his fondest pride!)
Laid down in patches, where th' audacious thief,
Squatting composedly, had munched her fill.
Dire was the wrath of Ephraim! much raved he
Of traps, and guns, and vengeance—whence restrained
By interdiction of the higher powers,
He muttered 'twixt his teeth reflections keen
About the blind indulgence of *some folk*
For children's whimsies—"Who could keep, forsooth,
A garden as it should be kept—not he—
If noxious *varmint* was encouraged there?
What was the use of hares but for the spit?
He wished with all his heart that the whole race
Was killed and spitted. Every thing he did
Was crossed and thwarted—mischief was at work
In every corner. If he could but *ketch*
*Them* folk that meddled when his back was turned
Among his mouse-traps! 'Twas a thing unknown
*That* mouse-traps should be set from day to day
*With toasted cheese*, and never catch a mouse."

Ah friend! "there are more things in heaven and earth"
Than were dreamt of in *thy* philosophy.
Yet Ephraim had his shrewd suspicions too,
Though darkly hinted. There was *meaning* couched,
Tho' little terror in his threat'nings vague;
For he too loved me well—the kind old man!
And would have torn from his own reverend head
The few white locks ere hurt a hair of mine.
Who but old Ephraim treasured up for me
The earliest strawberry, cunningly matured
On the red plane of sun-reflecting tile?
Who laid aside for me the longest string
Of clear white currants? With inviting smile,
Who dangled temptingly above my head
Twin cherries?—luscious prize! soon caught and won—
Who but old Ephraim, for his "little Queen,"
Picked out (his favourite emblem of herself)
The smallest pippin with the pinkest cheek?
It pleased him that I took delight to watch
His rural labours—that I asked the names
Of seeds and plants, and when to sow and set,
And their fixed season to bear flower and fruit.
With patient seriousness he made reply
To questions multiplying faster still
Than he could answer. But it puzzled oft
His honest head (no learned Pundit he)
To solve the curious questions I proposed,
*Why* such and such things were; to which most part
One answer served—incontrovertible,
Oracular—"they were, because they were."

Oh! what a deal of mischief were unmade
If Ign'rance always on perplexing points
*Replied as prudently*—if folks at least

Pretended to teach only what they know.
Young ladies! how especially for you
'Twould simplify the training! No she-Crichtons,
No petticoat professors would engage
To teach all 'OLOGIES and 'OGRAPHIES,
And every thing in all the world (of course
Accomplishments included), all complete
In all their branches. What a load of rubbish,
Now cramm'd, poor dears! into your hapless brains,
Would leave the much abused organ room
T' expand, and take in healthful nutriment.

Wise—honest Ephraim! Shall I leave unsung
Thy skill in fashioning small wooden toys,
Small tools, adapted to my pigmy grasp?
His hand is eagerly stretch'd out on whom.
Fortune bestows a sceptre; his no less
To whom she gives the baton of command,
The marshal's truncheon; and she smiles herself
At his more solemn transport, from beneath
The penthouse of enormous wig, who eyes
The seals of office dangling in his reach.
And bearded infants—babies six feet high,
Scramble for glitt'ring baubles; ribbons, stars,
And garters, that she jingles on a pole
For prizes to the foremost in the race,
Or who leaps highest, or with supplest joints
Who twists, and turns, and creeps, and wriggles best.
But none with greater eagerness than I
From Ephraim's hand received the finish'd spade
Whose small dimension might have served at need
Some kitchen damsel for a tasting spoon,
*Albeit proportion*'d aptly for my use;
*And other tools* he fashioned, rakes and hoes,

And oh! sublime perfection of his craft,
Most precious specimen! his genius last
Shaped out a wheelbarrow, and I attain'd
(Possess'd of that long coveted machine)
The climax of my wishes. What delight
To cram it with such offsets, plants, and bulbs
As Ephraim from his own neat borders cast;
Then to wheel off the load (no matter what)
To my own garden. Nought came then amiss
Or out of season. Scions of tall trees,
And bushy shrubs, that, had they taken root
And flourish'd, would have fill'd the small domain;
And ragged pinks, with huge old scraggy roots,
Past hope of e'er producing flower or bud,
And plants full blown, that nothing lack'd—but roots.

But not unfrequently the wheelbarrow
Was freighted with a living, yelping load—
Old Chloe's puppies: She the while, poor fool!
Trotting beside with anxious look and whine
Much eloquent of wonder and dismay
And half-displeased remonstrance, at th' enforced
And early travels of her progeny.
Many there are among Creation's Lords
Whom Fashion wheels abroad (a listless load!)
As blind and senseless as those noisy whelps,—
As blind to all the wonders in their way
Of Art and Nature: with as senseless noise
Chatt'ring among themselves their mother-tongue
In foreign lands, disdaining to acquire
The useless knowledge (spiritless pursuit!)
Of a strange people's customs, arts, and speech;
And who return with minds as unenlarged,
*And skulls as* empty, to their native land,

As to their kennel Chloe's brood return'd.
But they, poor innocents! were safe restored
With simple unsophisticated minds;
While two-legg'd puppies bring a cargo home
Of affectation, pedantry, and vice.

It is not all who having eyes can see,
Or having ears can hear: That truth we learn
From everyday experience. How it frets
One's soul to be associated with those
Deaf hearers, blind beholders! Frets one more,
That all the outward organs they possess,
As it appears unblemish'd. So we're led
To utter freely what we warmly feel;
And then it proves that all the wires and pipes
That should communicate 'twixt eyes and ears
And the indwelling Soul, to empty cells
Lead only, sending back response nor sound.

Say with a friend we contemplate some scene
Of nat'ral loveliness, from which the heart
Drinks in its fill of deep admiring joy;
Some landscape scene, all glorious with the glow
Of summer evening, when the recent shower
(Transient and sudden) all the dry white road
Has moistened to red firmness; every leaf
(Wash'd from the dust) restored to glossy green;—
In such an evening oft the setting Sun,
Flaming in gold and purple clouds, comes forth
To take his farewell of our hemisphere;
Sudden the face of Nature brightens o'er
With such effulgence, as no painter's art
May imitate with faint similitude.
*The rain-drops* dripping fast from every spray

Are liquid topazes; bright emeralds those
Set on the green foil of the glist'ning leaves,
And every little hollow, concave stone,
And pebbly wheel-track, holds its sparkling pool
Brimming with molten amber. Of those drops
The Blackbird lights to drink; then scatt'ring thick
A diamond shower among his dusty plumes,
Flies up rejoicing to some neighb'ring elm,
And pours forth such a strain as wakens up
The music of unnumber'd choristers.
Thus Nature to her great Creator hymns
An hallelujah of ecstatic praise.
And are *our* voices mute? Oh! no, we turn
(Perhaps with glist'ning eyes), and our full heart
Pour out in rapt'rous accents, broken words,
Such as require no answer, but by speech
As little measured, or that best reply,
Feeling's true eloquence, a speaking look.
But other answer waits us; for the *friend*—
(Oh! heaven! that there are such) with a calm smile
Of sweet *no-meaning* gently answers—"Yes,
Indeed it's very pretty—Don't you think
I'ts getting late though—time to go to tea?"

Some folks will tell you, of all things on earth
They most like reading; poetry with them
Is quite a passion; but somehow it is,
They never find a moment's leisure time
For things they dote on. What a life is theirs!
There's the new poem—they would give the world
To skim it over, but it cannot be;
That trimming must be finish'd for the ball.
If *you indeed*, who read aloud so well,
With so much feeling, would but take the book—

'Twould be so *nice* to listen! such a treat!
And all the while the trimming might go on.
You cannot have the heart to disappoint
Wishes express'd so sweetly. Down you sit
But unreluctant to the task, which soon
Absorbs your every feeling. 'Tis perhaps
Of Roderick, that immortal Goth, you read—
(Immortalized in verse that cannot die
Till Poesy is dead, and every heart
Warm'd with her sacred fire a senseless clod).

The first few pages smoothly on you go,
Yourself delighted, and delighting much
(So simply you believe) your hearers too.
At length a whisper, audibly aside,
Or cross the table, grates upon your ear,
And brings you from the region of romance—
"Dear! how provoking! have you seen my thread?
—No—here it is—Oh! pray don't stop—go on
With that delightful story."
On you go;
But scarce recover from the first rude shock,
When lo! a second. Deep debate ensues,
Grave, solemn, nice, elaborate, profound,
About the shade of some embroider'd leaf,
Whether too dark—or not quite dark enough—
Or whether *pea* green were not after all
Fitter than *apple* green. And there you sit
Devoutly banning in your secret soul
Balls, trimmings, and your own too easy faith
In sympathy from hearers so engross'd.
"Better leave off," you say, and close the book,
"*Till some* more leisure morning."—But at once
***All voices*** clamour at the barb'rous thought

Of such adjournment:—And you recommence,
Loath and disheartened; but a lull succeeds
Of seeming deep attention, and once more
The noble song absorbs you, heart and soul.
That part you reach, where the old Dog who lies
Beside Rusilla, and, unnoticed, long
Has eyed the dark-cowl'd Stranger; all at once
(Confirm'd by Love's strong instinct) crawls along
And crouches at his royal Master's feet,
And licks his hand, and gazes in his face
"With eyes of human meaning."
Then—just then,
When trembling like a harp-string to the touch
Of some impassion'd harmonist, your voice
Falters with strong emotion—
"Oh!" cries she,
The passion of whose soul is poesy,
"That dear sweet dog!—it just reminds me though
That poor Tonton was wash'd two hours ago,
And I must go and comb him, pretty love!
So for this morning (though it breaks my heart)
From that dear book I tear myself away."
Ah! luckless reader! wilt thou e'er again
On such as these expend thy precious breath?

Some travell'd exquisites profess a taste
("Gusto," they call it) for the sister art—
For painting. Heaven preserve us from such taste!
These learnedly harangue on breadth and depth,
Gradation, concentration, keeping, tone,
Tint, glazing, chiaroscuro, and what not.
At some old picture (moderns cannot paint),
Some smoke-dyed canvass, where experienced eyes
*In the brown chaos* may distinguish form,

Lo! where they gaze with reverential awe,
Peer through the focus of their rounded hand,
With features screw'd up to the exactest pitch
Of connoisseurship—fall enraptured back,
With head aside, and eyes all pucker'd up
Obliquely glancing—then with folded arms
They stand entranced, and gaze, and sigh, and gaze,
And mutter ecstacies between their teeth—
"Divine! incomparable! grand! unique!"

Less learn'd critics condescend t' admire
Some amateur production—yours perhaps;
These, little skill'd in jargon technical
Of conoscenti, murmur gentle praise;—
Holding your drawing to their eyes quite close,
As 'twere a newspaper, and they perplex'd
To make out the small print.—"Dear me!" they cry,
"How nice! how natural! how very soft!"
These phrases serve, or some as richly fraught
With meaning, for all subjects and all styles;
Or, if with more discriminating taste,
They own a preference—it falls, be sure,
On the most worthless, whose tame character
Is in this gentle phrase—"So very soft!"

Inflict not on me, Stars! the killing blight
Of such companionship. Oh! rather far
Assign me for my intimate and friend
One who says plainly—"I confess to me
Painting's but colour'd canvass, Music noise,
And Poetry prose spoilt; those rural scenes
Whereon *you* gaze enraptured, nothing more
*Than hill,* and dale, and water, wooded well
*With stout oak* timber groaning for the axe."

'Twixt such a heart and mine there must be still
A bar, oft painfully perceived indeed,
And never overstepp'd: But I could feel
Respect—affection—confidence for such,
If dignified with sound clear-judging sense
And piety, that gem beyond all price,
Wherewith compared all gifts are valueless.

It is not once an age two hearts are set
So well in unison that not a note
Jars in their music; but a skilful hand
Slurs lightly over the discordant tones,
And wakens only the full power of those
That sound in concord.
Happy, happy those
Who thus perform the grand concerto—Life!

# PART THE THIRD.

CONTENTS.

The Old Mile-stone.—Angling.—Royden Stream.—The Sivan Feast.—Age of Intellect.—Afternoon.—Isaac Walton.—A Bitter Night.—The Farmer.—The Pet Lamb.—Our Old Garden.—Painting.—The Altar.—Priscilla.—Tea Drinking.—Curiosities.—The Cuckoo Clock.—William Gilpin.—The Visit.—The Vicarage.—The Study.

# PART THE THIRD.

Old friend! old stone! old way mark! art thou gone?
I could have better spared a better thing
Than sight of thy familiar shapeless form,
Defaced and weather-stained. But thus it is
Where'er I turn me, wheresoe'er I look,
Change, change, change, change is every where at work
In all mine ancient haunts. Gramercie though!
Reform—improvement is the proper word—
We live, God wot, in an improving age,
And our old world, if it last long enough,
Will reach perfection. Lo! conceptions vast
Germ not alone in patriot statesman's mind
Or great philanthropist's. *Our* public men,
Ours in this rural district nook o' th' world,
"Armed with a little brief authority,"
Wield it like Jove's own thunder, and affect
Th' Olympic nod. Would they had nodded off
Their sapient heads, ere, in an evil hour,
Beautiful elms! your spreading branches fell,
Because, forsooth! across the King's highway,
Conspiring with the freeborn "chartered" air,
Your verdant branches treasonably waved,
And swung perchance the pendant dewdrops off
On roof of royal mail, or in the eyes
Of sleepy coachman, wakened so full well
For safety of his snoring "four insides,"

Unconscious innocents!—or on *his* pate—
His awful pate—ev'n his, mine ancient foe,
Your ruthless enemy—the man of power,
Of measurement, and acts of Parliament,
The great road dragon—man of flinty heart,
Belike ye showered the liquid crystal down,
Irreverend boughs! and so your fate was sealed.
But, veteran oak! what rank offence was thine?
In memory of man thou hadst not flung
One flickering shadow 'thwart the royal road,
Nor intercepted sunbeam from the head
Of noontide traveller. Only left of thee
The huge old trunk, still verdant in decay
With ivy garlands, and a tender growth
(Like second childhood) of thine own young shoots;
And there, like giant guardian of the pass,
Thou stood'st, majestic ruin! thy huge roots
(Whose every fretted niche and mossy cave
Harboured a primrose) grappling the steep bank,
A wayside rampart. Lo! they've rent away
The living bulwark now—a ghastly breach,
A crumbling hollow left to mark its site
And the proud march of utilitarian zeal.

And the old thorns are gone—the thorns I loved,
For that in childhood I could reach and pluck
Their first sweet blossoms. They were low like me,
Young, lowly bushes, I a little child,
And we grew up together. They are gone;
And the great elder by the mossy pales—
How sweet the blackbird sang in that old tree!
Sweeter, methinks, than now, from statelier shades—
They've felled that too—the goodly harmless thing!
*That with its fragrant* clusters overhung

Our garden hedge, and furnished its rich store
Of juicy berries for the Christmas wine
Spicy and hot, and its round hollow stems
(The pith extracted) for quaint arrow heads,
Such as my father in our archery games
Taught me to fashion. That they've ta'en away,
And so some relic daily disappears,
Something I've loved and prized; and now the last—
*Almost* the last—the poor old mile-stone falls,
And in its place this smooth, white, perked up thing,
With its great staring figures.
Well! well! well!
All's doubtless as it should be. Were *my* will
The rule of action, strange results, I doubt,
Would shock the rational community.
No farmer round should clip one straggling hedge,
No road-surveyor change one rugged stone,
Howe'er illegible its lettered face,
Nor pare, nor trim, nor chop one craggy bank,
Nor lop one wayside tree, although its boughs
Arched all the royal road. I'd have the road
One bowery arch—what matter if so low
No mail might pass beneath? For aught I care
The post might come on foot—or not at all,
At least with tidings of the troublous world.
In short—in short, it's quite as well, perhaps,
I can but rail—not rule. Splenetic words
Will not tack on again dissevered boughs,
Nor set up the old stone; so let me breathe
The fulness of a vexed spirit out
In impotent murmurs.
Gentles! could ye guess
What thoughts, what feelings, what remembrances
Are *in my mind* associated with sight

Of that cold senseless stone, that shapeless thing
Which there lies prostrate, ye would smile perhaps,
But not methinks in *scornful* wonderment
At the strange utterings of my wayward mood.
Here, to this very spot (the guardian hand
Still clasping mine) with tottering steps I came—
A good half mile from home—my first *long* walk—
The first remembered. Here, the goal attained,
They set me up on the old stone to rest,
And called me woman!—Baby now no more,
Who walked so stoutly; filled my lap with flowers,
And pulled within my reach the woodbine down,
That I might pluck, with mine own eager hand,
A wreath for Dido's neck. She sat beside,
(The grave old creature!) with her large brown eyes
Intently, as in delegated watch,
Fixed on her master's child. Soon came the days,
When *his* companion, his—his only one
My father's—I became. Proud, happy child!
Untiring now, in many a lengthened walk,
Yet resting oft (his arm encircling me)
On the old mile-stone, in our homeward way.

My father loved the patient angler's art;
And many a summer day, from early morn
To latest evening, by some streamlet's side
We two have tarried; strange companionship!
A sad and silent man; a joyous child—
Yet were those days, as I recall them now,
Supremely happy. Silent though he was,
My father's eyes were often on his child
Tenderly eloquent—and his few words
Were kind and gentle. Never angry tone
*Repulsed me, if* I broke upon his thoughts

With childish question. But I learnt at last—
Learnt intuitively to hold my peace
When the dark hour was on him, and deep sighs
Spoke the perturbed spirit—only then
I crept a little closer to his side,
And stole my hand in his, or on his arm
Laid my cheek softly ; till the simple wile
Won on his sad abstraction, and he turned
With a faint smile, and sighed, and shook his head,
Stooping toward me : so I reached at last
Mine arm about his neck, and clasped it close,
Printing his pale brow with a silent kiss.

That was a lovely brook, by whose green marge,
We two (the patient angler and his child)
Loitered away so many summer days !
A shallow sparkling stream, it hurried now
Leaping and glancing among large round stones,
With everlasting friction chafing still
Their polished smoothness—on a gravelly bed,
Then softly slipt away with rippling sound,
Or all inaudible, where the green moss
Sloped down to meet the clear reflected wave,
That lipped its emerald bank with seeming show
Of gentle dalliance. In a dark, deep pool
Collected now, the peaceful waters slept
Embayed by rugged headlands ; hollow roots
Of huge old pollard willows. Anchored there,
Rode safe from every gale, a silvan fleet
Of milk-white water lilies ; every bark
Worthy as those on his own sacred flood
To waft the Indian Cupid. Then the stream
Brawling again o'er pebbly shallows ran,
On—on, to where a rustic, rough-hewn bridge,

All bright with mosses and green ivy wreaths,
Spanned the small channel with its single arch;
And underneath, the bank on either side
Shelved down into the water darkly green
With unsunned verdure; or whereon the sun
Looked only when his rays at eventide
Obliquely glanced between the blackened piers
With arrowy beams of orient emerald light
Touching the river and its velvet marge—
'Twas there, beneath the archway, just within
Its rough mis-shapen piles, I found a cave,
A little secret cell, one large flat stone
Its ample floor, embedded deep in moss,
And a rich tuft of dark blue violet.
And fretted o'er with curious groining dark,
Like vault of Gothic chapel, was the roof
Of that small cunning cave—"The Nereid's Grot!"
I named it learnedly, for I had read
About Egeria, and was deeply versed
In heathenish stories of the guardian tribes
In groves, and single trees, and silvan streams
Abiding co-existent. So methought
The little Naïd of our brook might haunt
That cool retreat, and to her guardian care
My wont was ever, at the bridge arrived,
To trust our basket, with its simple store
Of home-made, wholesome cates; by one at home
Provided, for our banquet-hour at noon.

A joyful hour! anticipated keen
With zest of youthful appetite I trow,
Full oft expelling unsubstantial thoughts
Of Grots and Naïds, sublimated fare—
*The busy, bustling* joy, with housewife airs

(Directress, handmaid, lady of the feast!)
To spread that "table in the wilderness!"
The spot selected with deliberate care,
Fastidious from variety of choice,
Where all was beautiful: Some pleasant nook
Among the fringing alders; or beneath
A single spreading oak; or higher up
Within the thicket, a more secret bower,
A little clearing, carpeted all o'er
With creeping strawberry, and greenest moss
Thick veined with ivy. There unfolded smooth
The snowy napkin (carefully secured
At every corner with a pebbly weight),
Was spread prelusive; fairly garnished soon
With the contents (most interesting then)
Of the well-plenished basket: simple viands,
And sweet brown bread, and biscuits for dessert,
And rich, ripe cherries; and two slender flasks,
Of cyder one, and one of sweet new milk,
Mine own allotted beverage, tempered down
To wholesome thinness by admixture pure
From the near streamlet. Two small silver cups
Set out our grand buffet—and all was done;
But there I stood immovable, entranced,
Absorbed in admiration—shifting oft
My ground contemplative, to re-peruse
In every point of view the perfect whole
Of that arrangement, mine own handy work.
Then glancing skyward, if my dazzled eyes
Shrank from the sunbeams, vertically bright,
Away, away, toward the river's brink
I ran to summon from his silent sport
My father to the banquet; tutored well,
As I approached his station, to restrain

All noisy outbreak of exuberant glee;
Lest from their quiet haunts the finny prey
Should dart far off to deeper solitudes.
The gentle summons met observance prompt,
Kindly considerate of the famished child:
And all in order left—the mimic fly
Examined and renewed, if need required,
Or changed for other sort, as time of day,
Or clear or clouded sky, or various signs
Of atmosphere or water, so advised
Th' experienced angler; the long line afloat—
The rod securely fixed; then into mine
The willing hand was yielded, and I led
With joyous exultation that dear guest
To our green banquet room. Not Leicester's self,
When to the hall of princely Kenilworth
He led Elizabeth, exulted more
With inward gratulation at the show
Of his own proud magnificence, than I,
When full in view of mine arranged feast,
I held awhile my pleased companion back,
Exacting wonder—admiration, praise
With pointing finger, and triumphant "There!"

Our meal concluded—or, as Homer says,
"Soon as the rage of hunger was appeased"—
* * * * * *
And by the way, our temp'rate silvan feast
Deserved poetic illustration more
Than those vast hecatombs of filthy swine,
Where Trojans, Greeks, and half-immortals gorged,
Sharp'ning their wits for council. Process strange!
But most effectual doubtless, as we see
*Clearly illustrated* in this our day,

In this our favour'd isle, where all affairs
(Glory to Britain's intellectual age!)
Begin and end with feasting: Statesmen meet
To eat and legislate; to eat and hang*
Judges assemble; chapters congregate
To eat and order spiritual affairs;
Philhellenists to eat and free the Greeks;
Committees of Reform, Relief, Conversion,
Eat with amazing unction: and so on,
Throughout all offices, sects, parties, grades,
Down to the Parish worthies, who assemble†
In conclave snug to eat, and starve the poor.

*Our* banquet over,—nor omitted then
Grateful acknowledgment for good received
From Him, whose open hand all living things
"Filleth with plenteousness,"—my dear companion
Sought once again the river's flowery marge,
To me committing (as the spreading out)
The gath'ring up all fragments of the feast,
"That nothing might be lost." Instruction wise,
By simple illustration well enforced!
Nor strain'd to Pharisaic meaning hard,
Forbidding to communicate the good
Abundantly bestow'd. So lib'ral dole
I scatter'd round for the small feather'd things
Who from their leafy lodges all about

* There exists, or did exist, in one of the Channel Islands, a singular convivial custom connected with the execution of criminals. The members of Court meet to celebrate the occasion with a dinner, and a few non-professional friends are invited "to come and eat a dead man."

† It may be almost superfluous to mention that this line, and, indeed, the whole paragraph, was written previous to the passing of the Municipal Reform Bill.

Had watch'd the strange intruders and their ways;
And eyed the feast with curious wistfulness,
Half longing to partake. Some bold, brave bird,
He of the crimsom breast, approaching near,
And near, and nearer, till his little beak
Made prize of tempting crumb, and off he flew
Triumphant, to return (permitted thief!)
More daringly familiar.
Neatly pack'd
Napkin and cups, with the diminish'd store
Of our well-lighten'd basket—largess left
For our shy woodland hosts some special treat
In fork'd branch or hollow trunk for him
The prettiest, merriest, with his frolic leaps
And jet black sparkling eyes, and mimic wrath
Clacking loud menace. Yet before me lay
The long bright summer evening. Was it long,
Tediously long in prospect? Nay, good sooth!
The hours in Eden never swifter flew
With Eve yet innocent, than fled with me
Their course by thy fair stream, sweet Royden Vale!

The stream, the mead, herb, insect, flower and leaf,
Sunbeam and shadow,—all, as I have said,
Were books to me, companionable things;
But lack of other volume, Man's device,
Was none, when turning from the outspread scroll
Of beauteous Nature, sweet repose I sought
In varied pleasure. In a certain pouch,
Ample and deep, the Fisher's coat within,
Lurk'd an old clumsy russet cover'd book,
That with permitted hand extracted thence—
(I *see* the smile to the young smiling thief
*Vouching impunity*)—for many an hour

Furnish'd enjoyment, flavour'd not the less
For oft renew'd experience intimate.
Just where the river with a graceful curve
Darken'd and deepen'd in the leafy gloom
Of a huge pollard oak—a snug retreat
I found me at the foot of that old tree,
Within the grotto work of its vast roots,
From whose fantastic arches, high upheaved,
Sprang plumy clusters of the jewell'd fern,
And adder's-tongue, and ivy wreaths hung down
Festooning elegant; soft greenest moss
Flooring the fairy cave; the temper'd light
(As through an emerald roof) stole gently in,
Caressingly, and play'd in freckling gleams
On the dark surface of the little pool,
Where as it seem'd the ling'ring stream delay'd
As loath its brawling course to recommence
In glaring sunshine. Ah! could *we* delay
Time's current, as it bears us through some reach
Where the rough stream sinks waveless, peace-embay'd.

The river at my feet, its mossy bank,
Clipt by that cavern'd oak my pleasant seat;
Still as an image in its carved shrine
I nestled in my silvan niche, like hare
Upgather'd in her form, upon my knees
The open book, o'er which I stooped intent,
Half-hidden (the large hat flung careless off)
In a gold gleaming shower of auburn curls.
Ah! gentle Isaac! by what glamourie
Chain'd ye the eyes of restless childhood down
To pages penn'd for other readers far,
Mature and manly? What concern of mine
Thy learn'd lessons to the docile twain,

Thy sometime pupils? What concern of mine
Thy quaint directions how to dress a chub?
Or bait the barb'd hook with hapless frog
"Lovingly handled?" What concern of mine
Thy merry meetings at that rural hostel
With the fair hostess? lavender i' th' window,
And "twenty ballads stuck about the wall?"
Yet sure I long'd to share of that same chub,
And took no thought how that unlucky frog
Relish'd such loving treatment; and full fain
Would have made one at that same merry board,
And drank in with insatiate ear thy words,
Rich in the truest wisdom, for throughout
(Hallowing whate'er of homely, quaint, and coarse
Might shock fastidious taste, less pure than nice)
The love of God, and Man, and holy Nature
Breathed like the fragrance of a precious gum
From consecrated censor. Then those scraps
From th' olden poets! "the divine Du Bartas!"
And "holy Master Herbert!" and Kit Marlowe!
Whose ballad by the modest Milkmaid sung
Combined methought sweet strain of sweetest bird,
And pleasant melody of trickling rill,
And hum of bees, and every natural tone
Most musical. And then what dear delight
Beneath the sheltering honeysuckle hedge
To share thy leafy covert, while "the shower*

* "But turn out of the way a little, good scholar, towards yonder high honeysuckle hedge; there we'll sit and sing, whilst this shower falls so gently upon the teeming earth, and gives yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows. Look, under the broad beech-tree I sat down, when I was last this way a-fishing, and the birds in an adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in *a hollow tree, near to* that primrose hill."—ISAAC WALTON.

Fell gently down upon the teeming earth,
From the green meadows all with flowers bedeck'd,
Wakening delicious odours; while the birds
Friendly contention, from a grove hard by,
Held with an echo, whose dead voice did live
(So seeming) in a hollow tree high up
Crowning the primrose knoll." Ah! gentle Isaac!
How could I choose but love thy precious book,
Then in that blessed springtime of my life
When life was joy, this fair earth paradise,
And thine a master-key, in its green glades
Opening innumerous paths! I love thee still
With an exceeding love, old batter'd book!
And from thy time-discolour'd leaves outsteal
Methinks sweet breathings of that merry May
So long o'erpast. My winter is at hand
(Summer departed, Autumn on the wane),
But as I read, and dream, and smile, and sigh,
Old feelings stir within me, old delights
Kindle afresh, and all the past comes back
With such a rush, as to its long dried bed
The waters of a stream for many a year
Pent from its natural course.
Oh! nothing dies—
Nothing is lost or wholly perisheth
That God hath called good, and given to Man,
Worth his immortal keeping. Let them go,
Let them pass from me like a troubled dream,
The things of this world; bitter apples all,
Like those by the Dead Sea, that mock the eye
With outward fairness, ashes at the core.
Let this frail body perish day by day,
And to the dust go down, and be resolved
Thereunto—earth to earth: But *I* shall live

In spiritual identity unchanged,
And take with me where happy spirits dwell
(Through Christ, the door, I hope admittance there)
All thoughts, desires, affections, memories
Sealed with the heavenly stamp, and set apart
(Made worthy) for duration infinite.

"This is a bitter night for the young lambs,"
My father said, and shivering drew his chair
Close in to the warm hearth. "The biting air,
When I looked out but now, was thick with snow
Fast driven in furious gusts—and, hark! that's hail
Clattering against the window."
To the storm
Listening a moment, with a pitying thought
For houseless wanderers; to our dear fire-side
We turned with grateful hearts, and sweetest sense
Of comfort and security, that each
Reflected in the other's face, read plain
As in a page of some familiar book
Long learned by heart.
"Cary! what makes you sigh
And look so sad i' th' sudden?" asked my mother,
As letting fall my pencil, I rose up,
And stealing to my father's side, drew close
The little stool, my own peculiar seat,
And, leaning on his knee, looked earnest up,
With that long deep-drawn breath, that ends so oft
Childhood's reflective pause.
"I'm thinking, mother,
Of what my father said about the lambs—
What *will* become of them this bitter night,
Poor little pretty creatures? We looked at them
*A long, long while*, in our way home to-day,

While with their mothers they were folded up
By the old shepherd. Some could hardly stand,
So very weak they were, so very young!
Don't you remember, father! you said then
A cold hard night would kill them."
"Did I, child?
Well, this is cold enough. But then the shepherd
Will take good heed to them—and——Little girl!
Have you not heard, and read, and learnt, how God
'Tempers the wind to the shorn lamb?' So these,
Helpless and tender as they are, his eye
Still watcheth, and his guardian care protects."

"Oh! but I wish"——unuttered was the wish;
For the door opened, and a burly form,
Much like a walking bear, the hairy cap
And shaggy wrapping coat, all white with snow,
Announced by baying house-dogs, and shown in
With little form by Joe, within the room
Advanced a step or two, in country fashion,
Scraping obeisance. Up sprung old Di
With hostile growling, from her master's feet;
But sniffing round the stranger, in a moment
Dropping her tail, she came contented back
To her warm station.
"What's the matter, Farmer,
That you're abroad so late this blust'rous night?"
My father, with a friendly greeting, asked.
"My little lassie, here, was just bewailing
For your young lambs—but they're all snug, I guess."

"Ay, ay, sir! thank ye kindly, snug enough;
And many thanks to miss, God bless her heart!"
He added, with a loving look at me,

Who had stolen round by this to my old friend,
Admiring much his bruin-like aspect.
A knowing twinkle with that loving look
Was mingled; and his bluff good-natured face
Brightened with kindliness, as he went on:—

"I'll lay my life on't, Miss will never guess
What I've got here, all cuddled up so warm
Under my old great coat. And yet, Lord love her!
The *thing's* for her, whatever it may be!"

Then there was wonder and impatient joy,
And jumping round and round, and
"Oh, dear Farmer!
Is it alive?—what is it?—*let* me look—
Only *one* peep."—And eagerly I pulled
At the wet shaggy coat.
"Just let me *feel!*"
Then with feigned caution he admitted slow
One little curious hand.
"How soft—how warm!—
It's a young kitten!"
"Kitten!—sure I'd scorn
To bring such vermin."
"Well, a rabbit, then—
Or—no—I'm sure now it's a guinea pig—
*Isn't* it, Farmer?"
"Guinea pigs don't bleat—
Harken!"
"Oh mercy!—it's a little lamb!"

"My Missis said 'twas just the thing for Miss,
When Amos brought it in an hour agone
*From the dead* ewe. The poor dumb brute had three,

This only living; well enough for strength,
Considering: and Miss will mud* it up
I know, as clever as a little queen,
If I may leave it for her."
If!—that if
Checked in a moment my ecstatic fit,
And a quick glance imploringly I turned
To the parental faces. Smiles were there,
But not consenting ones—and heads were shaken,
And sage remonstrance was preparing plain,
And lips were opened; but I stopt them quick
With smothering kisses, and—the lamb was mine.
And thanks to Lydia, maiden most expert
In things pertaining to the dairy's charge,
And country matters—ever mine ally,
Ready and faithful—the small creature throve
As though the mother's milk and her strong love
(Nature's unerring course) had nurtured it;
And from a tender fondling, soon became
My mate and playfellow. Such friends we were—
Willy and I! Inseparable friends,
In door and out—up-stairs and down—where'er
My step was heard, the little pattering hoofs
Close following, or before me, sounded too.
Only at lesson time awhile disjoined
The fond companionship. Good reason why—
The pupil never much renowned at best
For patient application; little chance
Was there of any, when that gamesome thing
Made scoff of learning, and its teachers grave;
Upsetting inkstands—nibbling copy-books—
And still provoking to irreverend mirth

* Mud—Provincial.

With some new merry mischief.
Time went on
(More wondrous had he stopt), and winsome Willy,
The pet lamb still, drew near to ram's estate—
Then 'gan affairs to alter. Budding horns,
Fondled at first, grew formidable things,
And pretty freedoms to audacious onslaughts.
Old Di was sent off howling—from the lines
Linen hooked down and tattered—maids laid sprawling—
And visitors attacked, and butchers' boys,
And bakers, with their trays and baskets butted,
And forced to fly and halloo for their lives.
Our mutual love still perfect, I alone
Scaped molestation, threatening life or limb;
Only for summer wear more cool and airy
The muslin frocks were made, by sundry slits
From top to bottom, and large eyelet holes;
But that was all in sport—no harm intended—
And I the last to take offence at things
Concerning only those who had to mend
Or to replace my wardrobe. But all hearts
Were not so placable, and day by day
Dark looks and angry murmurs darker grew,
And waxed more wrathful.
"'Twas not to be borne:
The beast was dangerous: some serious mischief
Would come of it at last; it must be seen to."
Oh Willy! Willy! how I quaked for fear
At those vague threatenings, with ingenious art
Concealing or excusing as I could
Thine oft delinquencies. But all in vain;
The fatal day, long dreaded, came at last.
*It was the time* of blossoms, and my father,
*Who in "trim gardens"* much delight did take,

Was scanning with a gardener's prideful eye
His neat espaliers; every well-trained branch
Thick set with bloom—deep blushing like the morn,
Or fainter tinged, or snow-white, of each sort
Indicative, and its abundant fruit. Fair show!
Rich promise! Many a season cold, unkind,
Had nipped the gardener's hope since such was seen—
"If frost returns not, and no cruel blight
Comes near us"—with exultant hope broke forth
My father's meditation—when, alas!
Destruction was at hand, and in mid speech
He stopt astounded. Frost nor blight most dire
So direful as the sight of visible mischief
Personified in Willy's form, at work
Ten paces off, where thick as snow flakes fell
A shower of milk-white blossoms. Glorious sport!
Another butting charge, and down they come,
Whitening the walk and border.
"Help! help! help!
Ho, Ephraim! Ephraim!" At the call appear
More than the summoned—rushes out amain
The gaping household, mistress, maids, and man,
And I, half guilty, much confounded cause
Remote, of all the evil, helpless then
To stay its progress.
"Here he is—here! here!
Stop him—he's off again!"
"Where? where?" "There, there!"
Down comes the flowery rain—that shake will do
For the old golden rennet—fair pearmain!
Thy turn comes next—and next—
"Destruction! death!
There goes the gansels bergamy—will no one
Stop the cursed brute?"

How beautiful he looked!
(Even in my shame and terror so I thought),
When at safe distance he stood still and gazed
At his pursuers with provoking air
Of innocent wonder, dangling from his mouth
A bunch of apple blossoms, now and then
Mumbled in wantonness.
"Confound him! there!
He's at the golden pippin—Where's the gun?
Joe! run and fetch it—or—hold, hold—a rope!
We'll noose the rascal!"
Oh my heart! my heart!
How died ye at the sound of guns and ropes!
But capture was not death—and he was caught,
Caught and led up to judgment. Willy! Willy!
That ever to such strait and to such wo
Thine evil courses should have brought us both!
For the decree went forth that parted us—
Thou to return to thy first owner's flock,
And I (bereaved!) to mourn my merry mate.
Ah doleful day! when for the last, last time
We two went forth together—thou, poor fool!
In thine unconscious gladness by my side
Trotting contentedly, tho' every step
Took thee to exile nearer, and my tears
Fell fast as summer rain drops. How I clung
(When to the farm we came) with sobbing clasp
About thy snowy neck! refusing comfort,
Although they told me, to assuage my grief,
A many flattering tales of good designed,
Peculiar good to thee. Thou wert to range
For life respected—master of the flock—
To crop the sweetest herbage, and be housed,
*When winter* came, in warm luxurious crib.

"But shall I see him sometimes?"
"Ay, ay, sure,
Often and often, when the flock comes back
From the far pastures."
Back it came—alas!
I saw not Willy—saw him never more;
But half deluded still by glozing words,
I thought not (witless!) of the butcher's cart,
Nor transmutation fell, by murderous sleight
Of sheep to mutton. To thy manes peace,
Offending fav'rite! wheresoe'er thy grave.

Dear garden! once again with lingering look
Reverted, half remorseful, let me dwell
Upon thee as thou wert in that old time
Of happy days departed. Thou art changed,
And I have changed thee—Was it wisely done?
Wisely and well, they say who look thereon
With unimpassioned eye—cool, clear, undimmed
By moisture such as memory gathers oft
In mine, while gazing on the things that are
Not with the hallowed past, the loved, the lost
Associated as those I now retrace
With tender sadness. The old shrubbery walk
Straight as an arrow, was less graceful far
Than this fair winding among flowers and turf,
Till with an artful curve it sweeps from sight
To reappear again, just seen and lost
Among the hawthorns in the little dell.
Less lovely the old walk, but there I ran
Holding my mother's hand, a happy child;
There were her steps imprinted, and my father's,
And those of many a loved one, now laid low
In his last resting place. No flowers methinks

That now I cultivate are half so sweet,
So bright, so beautiful as those that bloomed
In the old formal borders. *These* clove pinks
Yield not such fragrance as the true old sort
That spiced our pot-pourrie (my mother's pride)
With such peculiar richness; and this rose,
With its fine foreign name, is scentless, pale,
Compared with the *old* cabbage—those that blushed
In the thick hedge of spiky lavender—
*Such* lavender as *is* not now-a-days;
And gillyflowers are not as they were then
*Sure to "come double;"* and the night breeze now
Sighs not so loaded with delicious scents
Of lily and sevinger. Oh, my heart!
*Is* all indeed so altered?—or art thou
The changeling, sore aweary now at times
Of all beneath the sun?
Such weariness
Knows not that blessed springtime of the heart
When "treasures dwell in flowers." How glad was I,
How joyously exultant, when I found
Such virtues in my flowery treasury
As hitherto methought discoverer's eye
Had passed unheeded! Here at once I found,
Unbought, unsued for, the desired command
(How longingly desired!) of various dyes,
Wherewith to tint the semblance incomplete
In its hard pencil outline, of those forms
Of floral loveliness, whose juices now
Supplied me with a palette of all hues,
Bright as the rainbow. Brushes lacked I none
For my rude process, the soft flower or leaf
Serving for such; its moisture nice expressed
*By a small cunning* hand, where'er required

The imitative shadow to perfect
With glowing colour. Heavens! how plain I see,
Ev'n at this moment, the first grand result
Of that occult invention. *There* it lies,
Living as life itself (I thought no less),
A sprig of purple stock, that dullest eye
Must have detected, and fault-finding critic
Have owned at least a likeness. Mother's love
Thought it perfection, when with stealing step
And flushing face and conscious, I drew near
And laid it on her lap without a word;
Then hung upon her shoulder, shrinking back
With a child's bashfulness, all hope and fear,
Shunning and courting notice;
But I kept
Profoundly secret, certain floral rites
Observed with piously romantic zeal
Through half a summer. Heaven forgave full sure
The unconscious profanation, and the sin,
If sin there was, be on thy head, old friend,
Pathetic Gesner! for thy touching song
(That most poetic prose) recording sad
The earliest annals of the human race,
And death's first triumph, filled me, heart and brain,
With stirring fancies, in my very dreams
Exciting strange desires to realize,
What to the inward vision was revealed,
Haunting it like a passion. For I saw,
Plain as in substance, that first human home
In the first earthly garden;—saw the flowers
Set round her leafy bower by banished Eve,
And watered with her tears, as they recalled
Faintly the forfeit Eden; the small rills
*She taught to* wander 'mongst their blooming tribes,

Completing—not the semblance, but the shade.
But beautiful, most beautiful methought
The altar of green turf, whereon were laid
Offerings as yet unstained with blood—choice fruits,
And fairest flowers fresh culled.
"And God must still,"—
So with myself I argued—"surely love
Such pure, sweet offerings. There can be no harm
In laying them, as Eve was wont, each day
On such an altar;—what if I could make
Something resembling that!" To work I went
With the strong purpose, which is strength and power;
And in a certain unfrequented nook
Of our long rambling garden, fenced about
By thorns and bushes, thick with summer leaves,
And threaded by a little water-course
(No substitute contemptible methought
For Eve's meandering rills), uprose full soon
A mound of mossy turf, that when complete,
I called an altar; and with simple faith—
Ay—and with feelings of adoring love
Hallowing the childish error—laid thereon
Daily my floral tribute—yet from prayer,
Wherewith I longed to consecrate the act,
Refraining with an undefined fear
(Instinctive) of offence: and there was doubt
Of perfect blamelessness (unconscious doubt)
In the suspicious, unrelaxing care
With which I kept my secret. All's not well,
When hearts, that should be open as the day,
Shrink from inspection. So by slow degrees
I grew uneasy and afraid, and longed
*To cast off* the strange burthen—and at last,
*Ceasing my visits* to "the sacred grove,"

I soon forgot, absorbed in fresh pursuits,
The long neglected altar—till one day,
When coming winter, with his herald blasts
Had thinned the covert's leafiness, I saw
Old Ephraim in his clearing progress pause,
And strike his spade against a mossy heap,
Washed low by autumn's rains, and littered round
Among the thick strewn leaves, with spars and shells,
And broken pottery, and shrivell'd things
That had been garlands.
" This is Missy's work,"
Quoth the old man, and shook his head, and smiled—
" Lord bless her! how the child has toiled and moiled
To scrape up all this rubbish. Here's enough
To load a jackass!"
Desecrated shrine!
Such was thy fate, demolished as he spoke;
And of my Idyl, the concluding page.

" The Thane of Fife"—said some one—" hath a wife,"
And so had Ephraim—a precise old dame,
Looking like ancient waxwork; her small face
Of lemon-coloured hue (framed closely round
With most elaborate quilling) puckered up
To such prim fixedness, the button mouth
Scarcely relaxed into a button hole
When with a smile distended; and the eyes,
(Two small black beads) but twinkled, never moved.
And mincing was her speech, and picked withal,
Dainty and delicate, as was her frame,
Like an old fairy's. She had spent her youth,
And prime, and middle age—two thirds of life—
In service of a maiden gentlewoman
Of *the old buckram* sort, wellnigh extinct;

Prudent, and formal, and fantastical,
Much given to nervous tremors, and hysterics,
Flutterings, and qualms, and godly books, and tales
Of true love crossed, and dreams, and pious courtship.
Of that soft sisterhood was Mistress Martha,
On one-legged bullfinches and wheezing lapdogs
Who lavish sympathies long run to waste,
"Since that unhappy day"—('twas her own phrase
Mysterious, unexplained) oft hinted at
In memory's melting mood to faithful Prissey,
With sighs deep fetched, and watery upturned eyes
Glancing unutterable things, where hung
Enshrined in shagreen case, a miniature
Set round with garnets, in a true love knot
Wreathed at the top; the portraiture within
Of a slim, pink and white young gentleman
In bag and solitaire, and point cravat,
With a peach blossom coat—"Ah Prissey! Prissey!
Good girl! remember." So the lady still
Addressed her handmaiden, when forty years
And five full told, her girlhood had matured—
"Men are deceivers all—put no faith in them;
But live and die a chaste and peaceful maid."
With decent grief, Priscilla to the grave
Followed her monitress; and that day month
To Ephraim (who had waited for his wife
With patriarchal patience), nothing loath,
Plighted her virgin troth.
Came with the bride
Into her husband's long prepared home,
In carved oak chest, and trunks with gilded nails,
Curiously flourished, store of household stuff,
*And goodly* raiment—of the latter, much
*Unfitting wear*, for decent humble folk

Knowing their station, as full well did they,
Keeping thereto, with sense of self-respect
Ensuring that of others. But Priscilla
(A favoured handmaiden, and privileged),
Accustomed long to copy (half unconscious)
Her lady's speech, and habits, and attire—
I well remember now her puffed out kerchief,
Closed with a garnet pin, her black fringed mits,
And narrow velvet collar—thought no wrong
On Sundays, and on suitable occasions,
To come forth, awful to the cottage children,
In rustling pomp of some grave coloured lustring,
Sprigged muslin apron, short black satin cloak
(A thought embrowned with age, but handsome still),
Edged round with rabbit skin, and on her head,
By long black pins secured to cap and cushion,
A bonnet—Mistress Martha's second best—
A velvet skimming dish, flounced round with lace
Darned to a double pattern. Then her shoes!
Black velveteen, high-heeled, with silver buckles.
So in her glory did Priscilla shine
On holidays and high days. Then her wits
(In housewifery expedients rich) were taxed
To cut, convert, turn, twist, transmogrify
Incongruous elements to useful ends.
Triumph of female skill!—as by enchantment,
Even at the waving of the magic shears,
Sacks, petticoats, and negligees, became
Waistcoats and breeches. Shade of Mistress Martha!
Saw ye the desecration? So on Sundays,
Donning brocaded vest, and nether garment
Quilted like wise King Jamie's—warm and rich—
His good drab broadcloth coat with basket buttons
(Heir'd from his grandsire) making all complete

Of Ephraim's outward man; forth sallied he,
Doing discredit none to her whose eye
Glanced side-long approbation, as they took
Leisurely, arm in arm, the churchward way.
No scholarship had Ephraim. A plain man,
Plain spoken, chary of his words was he,
But full of reverence for Priscilla's claims
To knowledge, learning, and superior breeding.
Deep read was she in varied lore profound,—
Divinity, Romance, and Pharmacy,
And—so the neighbours whispered—in *deep* things
Passing the Parson's wisdom. Store of books
(The richest portion of the bridal dower)
Were ranged in goodly order on two shelves
(The third and topmost with choice porcelain piled),
Surmounting an old walnut-tree bureau;
The Holy Bible, cased in green shaloon,
And Book of Common Prayer (a fine black type)
Were laid conspicuous on the central spot,
As first in honour: flank'd on either side
By Taylor's Golden Grove, The Pilgrim's Progress,
And Fox's Book of Martyrs. How I loved
To ransack those old tawny, well-thumb'd leaves,
Supping my fill of horrors! Sermons too—
(Discourses hydra-headed) had their place,
And "Hervey's Meditations 'mongst the Tombs,"
With courtly Grandison and Pamela
(All full of cuts—supreme delight to me!)
And the true history—sweetly scented name!
Of Jemmy and fair Jenny Jessamy.

Then came a ragged row of Magazines,
*And songs,* and hymn-books.—"Kettlewell on Death,"
*And "Glass's* Cookery." Treatises abstruse

On Moles and Warts, and virtues of all herbs,
And ailments manifold that flesh is heir to.
What wonder if respect akin to awe
For her who own'd and *studied* those grave tomes
Impress'd the simple neighbours? For myself—
—Unblushingly I do confess it now—
Not without tremor, half delight, half fear,
I enter'd, clinging to the Nursemaid's hand,
Through the clipt laurel porch, that small neat room,
So nicely sanded round the clean swept hearth,
Where sat expectant—(Mistress Jane I trow
Had her appointments for occult discourse
And cup of fragrant Hyson)—the wise woman
With her strange primm'd up smile; the round claw table
Set out before her with its precious freight
(In Sheffield tea-tray) of old *real* china,
The sugar-basin a scoop'd cocoa-nut
Curiously carved all o'er and ebon stain'd,
On three small toddling silver feet, rimm'd round
With the same precious metal; silver tongs
Stuck for effect among the sparkling knobs,
With two thin tea-spoons of the treasured six;
There on its trivot the bright kettle sang,
Its cheek all ruddy with rich fire-light glow;
And piping hot the butter'd oven-cake
Smoked on the fender ledge, all ready quarter'd;
Inviting preparations! not alone
To black-eyed Jane: the treat had charms for me
More irresistible;—that butter'd cake!
—Forbidden dainty—tea with cream and sugar!
True, but *just* finish'd was my nursery meal—
Dry bread and milk and water. "What of that?
The precious lamb had walk'd a weary way,
And sure must need refreshment. One small piece

Of nice hot butter'd cake would do her good,
And tea, a saucer-full, to wash it down."
So urged the Dame: Jane shook her head and smiled,—
Conscience made faint resistance,—the rich steam
Rose fragrant to my nostrils, and—I fell.

My treat despatch'd, the Maid and Matron turned
To whisper'd consultation, leaving me
(Right glad) to seek amusement as I would.
No lack of that, though I had staid for hours.—
There was the cat and kitten—always *one*,
A creature of immortal kittenhood,
For whom, suspended by a worsted thread
To knob of dresser drawer, a bobbing cork
Dangled, perpetual plaything; there aloft
Among the crock'ry stood a small stuff'd pug,
Natural as life, tight curl'd up tail and all,
And eyes that glared a snarl; and there i' the sun
A venerable one-eyed cockatoo
With gouty legs, snored dozing in his cage—
A sacred trust! by dying lips consign'd,
With his life income, to Priscilla's care.
Then there were prints and pictures hung all round—
Prints of the parables, and one rare piece,
A landscape—castles, clouds, trees, men, and sheep,
All featherwork! Priscilla when she died
Bequeath'd it to me. Poor old harmless soul!
That ever half-afraid I should have shrank,
Scarce knowing why, from one who loved me kindly:
But then she look'd so strangely, and they said
Such strange things of her.
Well! and then—and then—
There was the Book of Martyrs, and The Pilgrim,
*And fifty other* rarities and treasures;

But chief—surpassing all—a cuckoo clock!
That crowning wonder! miracle of art!
How have I stood entranced uncounted minutes,
With held-in breath, and eyes intently fix'd
On that small magic door, that when complete
Th' expiring hour—the irreversible—
Flew open with a startling suddenness
That, though expected, sent the rushing blood
In mantling flushes o'er my upturn'd face;
And as the bird (that more than mortal fowl!)
With perfect mimicry of natural tone,
Note after note exact time's message told,
How my heart's pulse kept time with the charm'd voice!
And when it ceased made simultaneous pause
As the small door clapt to, and all was still.

Long did I meditate—yea, often dream
By day and night, at school-time and at play—
Alas! at holiest seasons, even at church
The vision haunted me,—of that rare thing,
And his surpassing happiness to whom
Fate should assign its fellow. Thereupon
Sprang up crude notions, vague incipient schemes
Of future independence: Not like those
Fermenting in the youthful brain of her
Maternally, on fashionable system,
Train'd up betimes i' the way that she should go
To the one great end—a good establishment.
Yet similar in *some sort* were our views
Toward contingent power. "When I'm a woman
I'll have," quoth I,—so far the *will* and *when*
Tallied exactly, but our difference lay
Touching the end to be achieved. With me,
*Not* settlements, and pin-money, and spouse

Appendant, but in unencumber'd right
Of womanhood—a house and cuckoo clock!

Hark! as I hang reflective o'er my task,
The pen fresh nibb'd and full, held idly yet;
What sound comes clicking through the half-closed door,
Distinct, monotonous?—'Tis even so;
Years past, the pledge (self-plighted) was redeem'd;
There hangs with its companionable voice
The cuckoo clock in this mine house.—Ay, *mine;*
But left unto me desolate. Such end
Crowns oft Ambition's most successful aim
(Success than disappointment more defeating);
Passionate longing grasps the ripen'd fruit
And finds it marr'd, a canker at the core:
What shall I dare desire of earthly good
The seeming greatest; what in prayer implore
Or deprecate, of that my secret soul
In fondness and in weakness covets most
Or deepest dreads, but with the crowning clause,
The sanctifying—"Lord! thy will be done?"

Farther a-field we journey'd, Jane and I,
When summer days set in, with their long, light
Delicious evenings. Then—most happy child!
Most favour'd! I was sent a frequent guest,
Secure of welcome, to the loveliest home
Of all the country, o'er whose quiet walls
Brooded the twin-doves—Holiness and Peace:
There with thine aged partner didst thou dwell,
Pastor and master! servant of thy Lord,
Faithful as he, the labours of whose love
Recorded by thy pen, embalm for aye
*The name of Gilpin* heired by thee—right heir

Of the saint's mantle. Holy Bernard's life,
Its apostolic graces unimpaired,
Renewed in William's, virtuous parish priest!

Let me live o'er again, in fond detail,
One of those happy visits. Leave obtained,
Methought the clock stood still. Four hours past noon,
And not yet started on our three mile walk!
And *six* the vicarage tea hour primitive,
And I should lose that precious hour, most prized,
When in the old man's study, at his feet,
Or nestling close beside him, I might sit
With eye, ear, soul intent on his mild voice,
And face benign, and words so simply wise,
Framed for his childish hearer. "Let us go!"
And like a fawn I bounded on before,
When lagging Jane came forth, and off we went.
Sultry the hour, and hot the dusty way,
Though here and there by leafy skreen o'erarched—
And the long broiling hill! and that last mile
When the small frame waxed weary! the glib tongue
Slackening its motion with the languid limbs.
But joy was in my heart, howe'er suppressed
Its outward show exuberant; and, at length,
Lo! the last turning—lo! the well-known door,
Festooned about with garlands picturesque,
Of trailing evergreens. Who's weary, now?
Sounding the bell with that impatient pull
That quickens Mistress Molly's answering steps
To most unusual promptness—turns the lock—
The door uncloses—Molly's smiling face
Welcomes unasked. One eager, forward spring,
And farewell to the glaring world without;
*The glaring*, bustling, noisy, parched-up world!

And hail repose and verdure, turf and flowers,
Perfume of lilies, through the leafy gloom
White gleaming; and the full, rich, mellow note
Of song thrush, hidden in the tall thick bay
Beside the study window!
The old house
Through flickering shadows of high-arching boughs,
Caught gleams of sunlight on its time-stained walls,
And frieze of mantling vine; and lower down,
Trained among jasmines to the southern bow,
Moss roses, bursting into richest bloom,
Blushed by the open window. *There she sate,*
The venerable lady (her white hair
White as the snowy coif), upon her book
Or needlework intent; and near at hand
The maiden sister friend (a life long guest)
At her coarse sempstresship—another Dorcas,
Unwearying in the work of charity.

Oh! kindest greeting! as the door unclosed
That welcomed the half-bold, half-bashful guest;
And brought me bounding on at a half word
To meet the proffered kiss. Oh kindest care!
Considerate of my long, hot, dusty walk,
Of hat and tippet that divested me,
And clinging gloves; and from the glowing cheek
And hot brow, parted back the clustering curls,
Applying grateful coolness of clear lymph,
Distilled from fragrant elder—sovereign wash
For sunburnt skin and freckled! Kindest care,
That followed up those offices of love
By cautionary charge to sit and rest
"*Quite still* till tea time." Kindest care, I trow,
*But little relished.* Restless was my rest,

And wistful eyes still wandering to the door,
Revealed "the secret of my discontent,"
And told where I would be. The lady smiled,
And shook her head, and said,—
"Well! go your ways
And ask admittance at that certain door
You know so well." All weariness was gone—
Blithe as a bird, thus freed, away I flew,
And in three seconds at the well-known door
Tapped gently; and a gentle voice within
Asking "Who's there?" "It's *me*," I answered low,
Grammatically clear. "Let *me* come in."
The gentle voice rejoined; and in I stole,
Bashfully silent, as the good man's smile,
And hand extended, drew me to his chair;
And there, all eye and ear, I stood full long,
Still tongueless, as it seemed; love-tempering awe
Chaining my words up. But so kindly his,
His aspect so benign, his winning art
So graciously conforming; in short time
Awe was absorbed in love, and then unchained
By perfect confidence, the little tongue
Questioned and answered with as careless ease
As might be, from irreverend boldness free.
True love may cast out fear, but not respect,
That fears the very shadow of offence.

How holy was the calm of that small room!
How tenderly the evening light stole in,
As 'twere in reverence of its sanctity!
Here and there touching with a golden gleam
Book-shelf or picture-frame, or brightening up
The nosegay set with daily care (love's own)
Upon the study table. Dallying there

Among the books and papers, and with beam
Of softest radiance, starring like a glory
The old man's high bald head and noble brow—
There still I found him, busy with his pen—
(Oh pen of varied power! found faithful ever,
Faithful and fearless in the one great cause)—
Or some grave tome, or lighter work of taste
(His no ascetic, harsh, soul-narrowing creed),
Or that unrivalled pencil, with few strokes,
And sober tinting slight, that wrought effects
Most magical—the poetry of art!
Lovely simplicity! (true wisdom's grace)
That condescending to a simple child,
Spread out before me hoards of graphic treasures;
Smiling encouragement, as I expressed
Delight or censure (for in full good faith
I played the critic), and vouchsafing mild
T' explain or vindicate; in seeming sport
Instructing ever; and on graver themes
Winning my heart to listen, as he taught
Things that pertain to life.
Oh precious seed!
Sown early; soon, too soon the sower's hand,
The immediate mortal instrument withdrawn,
Tares of this evil world sprang thickly up
Choking your promise. But the soil beneath
(Nor rock nor shifting sand) retained ye still,
God's mercy willing it, until *his* hand,
Chastening as fathers chasten, cleared at last
Th' encumbered surface, and the grain sprang up.—
But hath it flourished?—hath it yet borne fruit
Acceptable? Oh Father! leave it not
*For lack of moi*sture yet to fall away!

# MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

# THE CHURCHYARD.

The thought of early death was in my heart;
Of the dark grave, and "dumb forgetfulness;"
And with a weight like lead,
And overwhelming dread,
Mysteriously my spirit did oppress.

And forth I roamed in that distressful mood
Abroad into the sultry, sunless day;
All hung with one dark cloud,
That like a sable shroud
On Nature's deep sepulchral stillness lay.

Black fell the shadows of the churchyard elms
(Unconsciously my feet had wandered there),
And through that awful gloom—
Head-stone and altar tomb
Among the green heaps gleam'd with ghastlier glare.

Death—death was in my heart, as there I stood,
Mine eyes fast fixed upon a grass-grown mound;
As though they would descry
The loathsome mystery
Consummating beneath that charnel ground.

Death—death was in my heart. Methought I felt
A *heavy hand*, that pressed me down below;

And some resistless power
Made me, in that dark hour,
Half long *to be*, where I abhorred to go.

Then suddenly, albeit no breeze was felt,
Through the tall tree-tops ran a shiv'ring sound—
Forth from the western heaven
Flashed out the flaming levin,
And one long thunder-peal rolled echoing round.

One long, long echoing peal, and all was peace;
Cool rain-drops gemmed the herbage—large and few;
And that dull vault of lead,
Disparting over head,
Down beamed an eye of soft celestial blue.

And up toward the heavenly portal sprang
A skylark, scattering off the feathery rain—
Up from my very feet;—
And oh! how clear and sweet
Rang through the fields of air his mounting strain.

Blithe, blessed creature! take me there with thee—
I cried in spirit—passionately cried—
But higher still and higher
Rang out that living Lyre,
As if the Bird disdained me in his pride.

And I was left below, but now no more
Plunged in the doleful realms of Death and Night—
Up with the skylark's lay,
My soul had winged her way
To the supernal source of Life and Light.

# THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS.

How happily, how happily the flowers die away!
Oh! could we but return to earth as easily as they;
Just live a life of sunshine, of innocence, and bloom,
Then drop without decrepitude or pain into the tomb.

The gay and glorious creatures! "they neither toil nor spin,"
Yet lo! what goodly raiment they're all apparelled in;
No tears are on their beauty, but dewy gems more bright
Than ever brow of eastern Queen, endiademed with light.

The young rejoicing creatures! their pleasures never pall—
Nor lose in sweet contentment, because so free to all;
The dew, the shower, the sunshine; the balmy blessed air,
Spend nothing of their freshness, though all may freely share.

The happy careless creatures! of time they take no heed;
Nor weary of his creeping, nor tremble at his speed;
Nor sigh with sick impatience, and wish the light away;
Nor when 'tis gone, cry dolefully, "Would God that it were day."

And when their lives are over, they drop away to rest,
Unconscious of the penal doom, on holy Nature's breast—
No pain have they in dying—no shrinking from decay.
Oh! could we but return to earth as easily as they!

# THE SPELL OF MUSIC.

"Oh! never, never hand of mine
Will wake the harp again,
The viewless harp, the many voiced,
The long beloved in vain.

"Oh! never, never heart of mine,
Throughout its inmost core,
With thrilling tones and symphonies
Will vibrate as of yore.

"On hand, and heart, and spirit now
A deadening spell has dropt—
'The Vision and the Voice' are o'er,
The stream of fancy stopt."

'Twas thus I mused, when suddenly
A strain of music stole,
Like perfume on the night breeze borne,
Into mine inmost soul.

And lo! the living instrument,
The chords unswept so long,
Responded that mysterious touch,
And trembled into song.

# TO DEATH.

Come not in terrors clad, to claim
An unresisting prey—
Come like an evening shadow, Death!
So stealthily! so silently:
And shut mine eyes, and steal my breath—
Then willingly—oh! willingly
With thee I'll go away.

What need to clutch with iron grasp
What gentlest touch may take?
What need, with aspect dark, to scare
So awfully—so terribly,
The weary soul would hardly care,
Called quietly, called tenderly,
From thy dread power to break?

'Tis not as when thou markest out
The young—the blest—the gay;
The loved, the loving; they who dream
So happily, so hopefully;
Then harsh thy kindest call may seem,
And shrinkingly—reluctantly
The summoned may obey.

But I have drank enough of life
(The cup assigned to me

Dashed with a little sweet at best,
So scantily—so scantily)—
To know full well that all the rest,
More bitterly—more bitterly
Drugged to the last will be:—

And I may live to pain some heart
That kindly cares for me—
To pain, but not to bless. O Death!
Come quietly—come lovingly,
And shut mine eyes, and steal my breath;
Then willingly—oh! willingly
With thee I'll go away.

# WHEN SHALL WE MEET AGAIN?

"WHEN shall we meet again?" my friend,
An awful question thine;
"*Where* shall we meet again?" not ours
The secret to divine.

Not ours to lift the veil, perchance
In tender mercy drawn;
Oh! could we look beyond, would Hope
Still lead us cheerly on?

Should we behold two *living* friends,
Long sundered, meet at last
In the far distance? or appalled,
Our shuddering glances cast

On a dark mound of Paynim mould
Uncrowned by turban'd stone;
Or a green grave of English earth,
As lowly and as lone?

Oh! likelier *that*—that English grave;
And one methinks may stand
Hereafter on its sod, and think
"Alas, my native land!

"A warmer welcome had been mine
This trying hour to cheer,
Had the poor heart been warm with life
Which darkly moulders here."

Nay let it fall that blessed veil
Which shuts the future out;
The *earthly* future--but beyond,
Away with dread and doubt.

"*When* shall we meet?" When Time is o'er,
And Sorrow past, and Pain;
"*Where* shall we meet?" God grant in Heaven,
Never to part again.

# TO THE MEMORY OF ISABEL SOUTHEY.

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, when Hope hath built a bower
Like that of Eden, wreathed about with every thornless flower,
To dwell therein securely, the self-deceiver's trust,
A whirlwind from the desert comes, and "all is in the dust."

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, that when the poor heart clings
With all its finest tendrils, with all its flexile rings,
That goodly thing it cleaveth to, so fondly and so fast,
Is struck to earth by lightning, or shattered by the blast.

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, with beams of mortal bliss,
With looks too bright and beautiful for such a world as this;
One moment round about us their "angel* lightnings" play,
Then down the veil of darkness drops, and all hath past away.

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, with sounds too sweet for earth—
Seraphic sounds, that float away (borne Heavenward) in their birth;
The golden shell is broken, the silver chord is mute,
The sweet bells all are silent, and hushed the lovely lute.

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, with all that's best below,
The dearest, noblest, loveliest, are always first to go,

* "Il lampeggiar del angelico riso."

The bird that sings the sweetest, the pine that crowns the rock,
The glory of the garden, the flower of the flock.

'Tis ever thus—'tis ever thus, with creatures heavenly fair,
Too finely framed to 'bide the brunt more earthly natures bear;
A little while they dwell with us, blest ministers of love,
Then spread the wings we had not seen, and seek their home above.

# "AURA VENI."

Balmy freshness! heavenly air,
Cool, oh! cool this burning brow;
Loose the fiery circlet there—
Blessed thing! I feel ye now.

Blessed thing! depart not yet,
Let me, let me quaff my fill,
Leave me not my soul to fret,
Gasping for what mocks me still.

Oh! the weary, weary nights
I've lain awake and thought of thee;
Of clouds and corn—and all sweet sights
Of shade and sunshine, flower and tree;

Of running waters, rippling clear,
Of greenwood glen, and gipsy camp;
Then how I loathed to see and hear
That ticking watch, that sickly lamp;

And longed, at least for light again,
For day—that brought no change to me—
The weight was on my heart and brain;
God might remove it—only He.

And now and then the fount of tears,
So seeming dry, was free to flow;
'Twas worth a score of joyous years,
That short-lived luxury of wo.

And in the midst of all my pain,
I *knew* I was not quite forgot,
I *knew* my cry was not in vain,
So I was sad, but fainted not.

And now the merciful command
Has lightened what was worst to bear,
And given of better days at hand
A foretaste in this blessed air.

# THE DYING MOTHER TO HER INFANT.

My Baby! my poor little one! thou'rt come a winter flower,
A pale and tender blossom, in a cold unkindly hour;
Thou comest like the snowdrop, and like that pretty thing,
The power that calls my bud to life will shield its blossoming.

The snowdrop hath no guardian leaves, to fold her safe and warm,
Yet well she bides the bitter blast, and weathers out the storm;
I shall not long enfold thee thus—not long, but well I know
The everlasting arms, my Babe! will never let thee go.

The snowdrop—how it haunts me still!—hangs down her fair young head;
So thine may droop in days to come, when I have long been dead.
And yet, the little snowdrop's safe—from her instruction seek;
For who would crush the motherless, the lowly and the meek?

Yet motherless thou'lt not be long—not long *in name*, my life!
Thy father soon will bring him home another, fairer wife;
Be loving, dutiful to her—find favour in her sight,
But never, O! my child, forget thine own poor mother quite.

But who will speak to thee of her?—the gravestone at her head
*Will only tell* the name and age, and lineage of the dead;

But not a word of all the love—the mighty love for thee,
That crowded years into an hour of brief maternity.

They'll put my picture from its place, to fix another's there,
That picture that was thought so like, and then so passing fair!
Some chamber in thy father's house they'll let thee call thine own;
Oh! take it there to look upon, when thou art all alone—

To breathe thine early griefs unto, if such assail my child;
To turn to from less loving looks, from faces not so mild.
Alas! unconscious little one, thou'lt never know that best,
That holiest home of all the earth, a living Mother's breast.

I do repent me now too late of each impatient thought,
That would not let me tarry out God's leisure as I ought:
I've been too hasty, peevish, proud; I long'd to go away;
And now I'd fain live on for thee, God will not let me stay.

Oh! when I think of what I was, and what *I might have been,*—
A bride last year—and now to die!—and I am scarce nineteen:
And just—just op'ning in my heart a fount of love so new!
So deep!—Could *that* have run to waste—could that have fail'd me too?

The bliss it would have been to see my daughter at my side!
My prime of life scarce overblown, and hers in all its pride.
To deck her with my finest things—with all I've rich and rare;
To hear it said—"How beautiful! and good as she is fair!"

And then to place the marriage wreath upon that bright young brow—
—*Oh! no—not that*—'tis full of thorns——Alas! I'm wand'ring *now.*

This weak, weak head! this foolish heart! they'll cheat me to the last:
I've been a dreamer all my life, and now that life is past.

Thou'lt have thy father's eyes, my child!—Oh! once how kind they were!
His long black lashes—his own smile—and just such raven hair.
But here's a mark—Poor innocent! he'll love thee for't the less—
Like that upon thy Mother's cheek his lips were wont to press.

And yet—perhaps I do him wrong—perhaps when all's forgot
But our young loves, in memory's mood he'll kiss this very spot;
Oh! then, my dearest! clasp thine arms about his neck full fast,
And whisper that I bless'd him now, and loved him to the last.

I've heard that little infants converse by smiles and signs
With the guardian band of angels that round about them shines,
Unseen by grosser senses;—Beloved one! dost thou
Smile so upon thy heavenly friends, and commune with them now?

And hast thou not one look for me? Those little restless eyes
Are wand'ring, wand'ring, ev'rywhere, the while thy Mother dies;—
And yet—perhaps thou'rt seeking me—expecting me, mine own!
Come, Death! and make me to my child at least in spirit known.

# TO THE SWEET-SCENTED CYCLAMEN.

I LOVE thee well, my dainty flower!
My wee, white cowering thing,
That shrinketh like a cottage maid,
Of bold, uncivil eyes afraid,
Within thy leafy ring!

I love thee well, my dainty dear!
Not only that thou'rt fair—
Not only for thy downcast eye,
Nor thy sweet breath, so lovingly,
That woos the caller air—

But that a world of dreamy thoughts
The sight of thee doth bring;
Like birds who've wander'd far from hence,
And come again (we know not whence)
At the first call of spring.

As here I stand and look on thee,
Before mine eyes doth pass—
(Clearing and quick'ning as I gaze)
An evening scene of other days,
As in a magic glass.

*I see a small* old-fashioned room,
*With* pannell'd wainscot high—

Old portraits, round in order set,
Carved heavy tables, chairs, buffet
Of dark mahogany;

Twin china jars, on brackets high,
With grinning Monsters crown'd;
And one, that like a Phœnix' nest,
Exhales all Araby the Blest,
From that old bookcase round.

And there a high-back'd, hard settee,
On six brown legs and paws,
Flow'r'd o'er with silk embroidery,
And there,—all rough with filigree,—
Tall screens on gilded claws.

Down drops the damask curtain there
In many a lustrous fold;
The fire-light flashing broad and high,
Floods its pale amber gorgeously
With waves of redder gold.

And lo! the flamy brightness wakes
Those pictured shapes to life—
My Lady's lip grows moist and warm,
And dark Sir Edward's mailed form
Starts out for mortal strife—

And living, breathing forms are round—
Some gently touch'd by Time,
Staid Elders, clust'ring by the hearth,
And *one*, the soul of youthful mirth
Outlasting youthful prime.

And there—where *she* presides so well,
With fair dispensing hands—
Where tapers shine, and porcelain gleams,
And muffins smoke, and tea-urn steams,
The Pembroke Table stands—

That heir-loom Tea-pot!—Graphic Muse!
Describe it if thou'rt able—
Methinks—were such advances meet—
On those three, tiny, toddling feet,
'Twould swim across the table.

And curtsy to the coffee-pot
(Coquettishly demure),
Tall, quaint compeer!—fit partner he
To lead with her so gracefully
Le minuét de la cour!

Ah, precious Monsters! dear Antiques!
More beautiful to me,
Than modern, fine, affected things,
With classic claws, and beaks, and wings
("God save the mark!") can be—

How grateful tastes th' infused herb!
How pleasant its perfume!
Some sit and sip;—with cup in hand
This saunters round;—while others stand
In knots about the room—

In cozy knots—*there*, three and four—
*And here*, one, two, and three—
*Here by my* little dainty flower—

Oh fragrant thing! Oh pleasant hour!
Oh gentle company!

Come, Idler, set that cup aside,
And tune the flute for me—
What will I have? Oh, prithee, play
That air I love—"Te bien aimér
Pour toujours ma Zelie."

Sweet air!—sweet flower!—sweet social looks!—
Dear friends!—young, happy hearts!
How now!—What! all alone am I?
Come they with cruel mockery
Like shadows to depart?

Ay, shadows all—gone every face
I loved to look upon—
Hush'd every strain I loved to hear,
Or sounding in a distant ear—
"All gone!—all gone!—all gone!"

Some far away in other lands—
In this—some worse than dead—
Some in their graves laid quietly—
One, slumb'ring in the deep, deep sea—
All gone!—all lost!—all fled!

And here am I—I live and breathe,
And stand, as *then* I stood,
Beside my little dainty flower—
But *now*, in what an alter'd hour!
In what an alter'd mood!

And yet I love to linger here—
To inhale this od'rous breath—
(Faint as a whisper from the tomb)
To gaze upon this pallid bloom
As on the face of Death.

# THE TREATY.

NEVER tell me of loving by measure and weight,
As one's merits may lack or abound;
As if love could be carried to market like skate,
And cheapen'd for so much a-pound.

If it can—if *yours* can, let them have it who care—
You and I, friend! shall never agree—
Pack up, and to market be off with your ware;
It's a great deal too common for me.

D'ye linger?—d'ye laugh?—I'm in earnest I vow—
Though perhaps over hasty a thought;
If you're thinking to close with my terms as they are,
Well and good—but I wont bate a jot.

You must love me—We'll note the chief articles now,
To preclude all mistakes in our pact—
And I'll pledge ye, unask'd and beforehand, my vow,
To give double for all I exact.

You must love me—not only through "evil report,"
When its falsehood you more than divine;
But when upon earth I can only resort
To your heart as a voucher for mine.

You must love—*not my faults*—but in *spite* of them, ***me***,
For the very caprices that vex ye ;
Nay the more, should you chance (as it's likely) to see
'Tis my special delight to perplex ye.

You must love me, albeit all the world I offend
By impertinence, whimsies, conceit ;
While assured (if you are not, all treaty must end)
That I never can stoop to deceit

While assured (as you must be, or there too we part)
That were all the world leagued against you,
To loosen one hair of your hold on my heart
Would be more than " life's labours" could do.

You must love me, howe'er I may take things amiss,
Whereof you in all conscience stand clear ;
And although, when you'd fain make it up with a kiss,
Your reward be a box on the ear.

You must love me—not only when smiling and gay,
Complying, sweet temper'd, and civil ;
But when moping, and frowning, and froward—or say
The thing plain out—as cross as the Devil.

You must love me in all moods—in seriousness, sport ;
Under all change of circumstance too :
Apart, or together, in crowds, or—in short
You must love me—*because I love you.*

# THE LAST JOURNEY.

MICHAUD, in his description of an Egyptian funeral procession, which he met on its way to the cemetery of Rosetta, says—"The procession we saw pass stopped before certain houses, and sometimes receded a few steps. I was told that the dead stopped thus before the doors of their friends to bid them a last farewell, and before those of their enemies to effect a reconciliation before they parted for ever."—*Correspondence d'Orient, par* MM. MICHAUD *et* POUJOULAT.

SLOWLY, with measured tread,
Onward we bear the dead
To his long home.
Short grows the homeward road,
On with your mortal load.
Oh, Grave! we come.

Yet, yet—ah! hasten not
Past each familiar spot
Where he hath been;
Where late he walked in glee,
There from henceforth to be
Never more seen.

Yet, yet—ah! slowly move—
Bear not the form we love
Fast from our sight—
Let the air breathe on him,
And the sun leave on him
Last looks of light.

Rest ye—set down the bier,
One he loved dwelleth here.
Let the dead lie
A moment that door beside,
Wont to fly open wide
Ere he came nigh.

Harken !—he speaketh yet—
" Oh, friend ! wilt thou forget
(Friend more than brother !)
How hand in hand we've gone,
Heart with heart linked in one—
*All* to each other ?

" Oh, friend ! I go from thee,
Where the worm feasteth free,
Darkly to dwell—
Giv'st thou no parting kiss ?
Friend ! is it come to this ?
Oh, friend, farewell !"

Uplift your load again,
Take up the mourning strain !
Pour the deep wail !
Lo ! the expected one
To his place passeth on—
Grave ! bid him hail.

Yet, yet—ah !—slowly move ;
Bear not the form we love
Fast from our sight—
Let the air breathe on him,
And the sun leave on him
Last looks of light.

Here dwells his mortal foe ;
Lay the departed low,
E'en at his gate.—
Will the dead speak again ?
Uttering proud boasts and vain,
Last words of hate ?

Lo ! the dead lips unclose—
List ! list ! what sounds are those,
Plaintive and low ?
" Oh thou, mine enemy !
Come forth and look on me
Ere hence I go.

" Curse not thy foeman now—
Mark ! on his pallid brow
Whose seal is set !
Pard'ning I past away—
Thou—wage not war with clay—
Pardon—forget."

Now his last labour's done !
Now, now the goal is won !
Oh, Gravē ! we come.
Seal up this precious dust—
Land of the good and just,
Take the soul home !

# ONCE UPON A TIME.

Sunny locks of brightest hue
Once around my temples grew,—
Laugh not, Lady! for 'tis true;
Laugh not, Lady! for with thee
Time may deal despitefully;
Time, if long he lead thee here,
May subdue that mirthful cheer;
Round those laughing lips and eyes
Time may write sad histories;
Deep indent that even brow
Change those locks, so sunny now,
To as dark and dull a shade,
As on mine his touch hath laid.

Lady! yes, these locks of mine
Cluster'd once with golden shine,
Temples, neck, and shoulders round,
Richly gushing if unbound,
If from band and bodkin free,
Wellnigh downward to the knee.
Some there were took fond delight,
Sporting with those tresses bright,
To enring with living gold
*Fing*ers, now beneath the mould
(*Wo* is me!) grown icy cold.

One dear hand hath smooth'd them too
Since they lost the sunny hue,
Since their bright abundance fell
Under the destroying spell—
One dear hand! the tenderest
Ever nurse child rock'd to rest,
Ever wiped away its tears—
Even those of later years
From a cheek untimely hollow,
Bitter drops that still may follow,
Where's the hand will wipe away?
Hers I kiss'd—(Ah! dismal day)
Pale as on the shroud it lay.
*Then*, methought, youth's latest gleam
Departed from me like a dream—
Still, though lost their sunny tone,
Glossy brown those tresses shone,
Here and there, in wave and ring,
Golden threads still glittering;
And (from band and bodkin free)
Still they flowed luxuriantly.

Careful days, and wakeful nights,
Early trench'd on young delights.
Then of ills an endless train,
Wasting languor, wearying pain,
Fev'rish thought that racks the brain,
Crowding all on summer's prime,
Made me old before my time.
So a dull, unlovely hue
O'er the sunny tresses grew,
Thinn'd their rich abundance too,
Not a thread of golden light
*In the* sunshine glancing bright.

Now again a shining streak
'Gins the dusky cloud to break ;—
Here and there a glittering thread
Lights the ringlets, dark and dead,—
Glittering light !—but pale and cold—
Glittering thread !—but *not* of *gold*.

Silent warning ! silvery streak !
Not unheeded dost thou speak.
Not with feelings light and vain—
Not with fond regretful pain,
Look I on the token sent
To declare the day far spent ;—
Dark and troubled hath it been—
Sore misused ! and yet between
Gracious gleams of peace and grace
Shining from a better place.

Brighten—brighten, blessed light !
Fast approach the shades of night,—
When they quite enclose me round,
May my lamp be burning found !

"A little cousin of mine, a beautiful child of nearly
years old . . . But before he breathed his last, he cast
his eyes, & looked round at the mourning & his mother
sister . . . & he in their faces, & clasped at the
arms, & said 'Good night, mamma; good night

# LITTLE LEONARD'S "GOOD-NIGHT."

"Good-night! good-night! I go to sleep,"
Murmur'd the little child;—
And oh! the ray of Heaven that broke
On the sweet lips that faintly spoke
That soft "Good-night," and smiled.

That angel smile! that loving look
From the dim closing eyes!
The peace of that pure brow! But there—
Ay—on that brow, so young! so fair!
An awful shadow lies.

The gloom of evening—of the boughs
That o'er yon window wave?—
Nay, nay—within these silent walls,
A deeper, darker shadow falls,
The twilight of the Grave—

*The twilight* of the Grave—for still
Fast comes the fluttering breath—
*One* fading smile—*one* look of love—
A murmur—as from brooding dove—
"Good-night."——And this is Death!

Oh! who hath called thee "Terrible!"
Mild Angel! most benign!

Aunt Caroline; Good night all
Love to

Could mother's fondest lullaby
Have laid to rest more blissfully
That sleeping babe than thine!

Yet this *is* Death—the doom for all
Of Adam's race decreed—
"But this poor lamb! this little one!—
What had the guiltless creature done?"
Unhappy heart! take heed;

Though he is merciful as just
Who hears that fond appeal—
He will not break the bruised reed,
He will not search the wounds that bleed—
He only wounds to heal.

"Let little children come to me,"
He cried, and to his breast
Folded them tenderly—To-day
He calls thine unshorn lamb away
To that securest rest!

# DEPARTURE.

When I go away from my own dear home
Let it be at the fall of the leaf—
When the soulless things that to me have been
Like spirits peopling the silent scene,
Are fading, as if in grief.

When the strains of the summer birds have ceased,
Or in far-off regions swell—
Oh! let me not hear the blithesome song
Of that Blackbird I fed all winter long,
When I'm taking my last farewell.

The Robin-redbreast will come, I know,
That morn to the window pane,
To look, as wont, for the scattered feast,
With his large dark eyes:—and that day, at least,
He shall not look in vain.

Let the Autumn wind, when I go away,
Make moan with its long-drawn breath—
"Fare thee well, sad one!" 'twill seem to say—
"Yet a little while, and a little way,
And thy feet shall rest in death."

And here, and there, an evergreen leaf
I'll gather from shrub and tree,

To take with me wherever I go;
And when this poor head in dust lies low,
To be laid in the coffin with me.

I go not like one in the strength of youth,
Who hopes, though the passing cloud
May pour down its icy hail amain,
That summer and sunshine may break out again
The brighter from sorrow's shroud.

An April morn and a clouded day
My portion of life hath been:
And darker and darker the evening sky
Stretches before me gloomily,
To the verge of the closing scene.

Gloomily darkens the evening sky:
I shall go with a heavy heart—
Yet—would I change, if the power were mine,
One tittle decreed by the will Divine?
Oh! no—not a thousandth part;—

In my blindness I've wished—in my feebleness wept—
With a weak, weak woman's wail—
But humbling my heart and its hopes in the dust
(All its hopes that are earthly)—I've anchored my trust
On the strength that can never fail.

# "HOW SWIFT IS A GLANCE OF THE MIND!"

## AN EXILE'S SONG.

"When I think of my own native land,
In a moment I seem to be there."

THAT flower, that flower! Oh! pluck that flower for me!
There, in the running stream,
Its silvery* clusters gleam:
Oh! give it me!
The same! the very same! I knew it well,
Last seen so long ago. Oh, simple flower,
That sight of thee should waken up this hour
Thoughts more than tongue can tell!

A moment since and I was calm and cold—
Cold as this world to me,
With all its pageantry,
Grown stale and old.
Now the warm blood, through every throbbing vein
Fast hurrying, mantles over cheek and brow,
Like youth and hope rekindling—ebbing now
To the full heart again:

* The Buckbean.

Leaving a paler cheek—a glistening eye
With watery gaze fixed fast
On visions of the past;
Oh! where am I?
At home, at home again in mine own land;
Its mountain streams are murm'ring in mine ear,
And thrilling voices from loud lips I hear.
There—there the loving band.

Mine own long lost!—Oh! take the weary one
To weep on some dear breast
This agony to rest—
On thine, my son!
Thou answerest not—None answer me—that cry
Was from mine own sad heart; and they are gone—
And at my feet the little brook flows on,
Tranquilly—tranquilly.

No mountain streamlet of my native land;
Yet doth its voice to me
Sound sweet and soothingly;
And in mine hand,
Of those pale flowers (now gemmed with tears) I hold
Henceforth to memory sacred:—from this hour
That they've awakened with such wondrous power,
Dreams of the days of old.

# THE PAUPER'S DEATH-BED.

TREAD softly—bow the head—
In reverent silence bow—
No passing bell doth toll,
Yet an immortal soul
Is passing now.

Stranger! however great,
With lowly reverence bow;
There's one in that poor shed—
One by that paltry bed,
Greater than thou.

Beneath that Beggar's roof,
Lo! Death doth keep his state:
Enter—no crowds attend—
Enter—no guards defend
*This* palace gate.

That pavement damp and cold
No smiling courtiers tread;
One silent woman stands
Lifting with meager hands
A dying head.

No mingling voices sound—
An infant wail alone;

A sob suppress'd—again
That short deep gasp, and then
The parting groan.

Oh! change—Oh! wond'rous change—
Burst are the prison bars—
This moment *there*, so low,
So agonized, and now
Beyond the stars!

Oh! change—stupendous change!
There lies the soulless clod:
The Sun eternal breaks—
The new Immortal wakes—
Wakes with his God.

# TO MY OLD CANARY.

'Tis many a long year now, Birdie!
Ay, sure—some seven years good,
Since I rhymed to you one day,
On a certain morn of May,
In an idle, sing-song mood.

I remember it all as well, Birdie,
The hour, and the place and the mood,
As if time, since slipt away,
Were little more than a day,
And yet is it seven years good!

A great sum of life struck off, Birdie!
And I feel it has told with me—
But you're looking as young and bright
As you did in that May morn's light,
And you're singing more merrily.

For then you were moping and mute, Birdie,
Though I begg'd (and you seem'd to hear me)
That you'd tune up that little throat,
But you never vouchsafed a note,
Not a single note to cheer me.

And your silence seem'd very unkind;
For, in sooth—as I well remember—
Though Earth wore her best array
That beautiful month of May,
My heart was as sad as December.

For then first I felt myself lonely,
Quite—quite left alone upon earth,
Hid for ever the last loving face,
And even the old dog's place,
Forsaken beside the hearth.

And I—though a sickly creature,
Might still live lingering on,
Like a trampled passion-flower,
Torn down from its bonny bower,
When all I had clung to was gone.

I sat at my pleasant window,
Where the myrtle and rose peeped in,
And without such a smile serene
Pervaded the quiet scene,
That sorrow seem'd almost a sin.

And I tried to rejoice with Nature,
For my heart was not sullen though sad;
But the cloud of my spirit lay
On all beautiful things that day,
And I could not—I *could* not be glad.

So I bent again to the task
That had dropt unperceived on my knee,
And my needle began to ply,
*Busily*—busily—
*As fast, as fast could be.*

Stitch after stitch I set
  Mechanically true,
But the seeming gaze intent,
On that dull labour bent,
  Had little with thought to do.

And soon from the careless finger
  A crimson drop was drawn—
And next—from a source less near—
Another, as crystal clear,
  Dropt on the snowy lawn.

And my sight grew dim—and again
  My hands fell listlessly—
And the sound of my very breath,
In that stillness as deep as death,
  Was a distress to me.

"Oh! for a sound of life
  From a single living thing,"
I passionately cried—
And *thou* wert by my side,
  Birdie! and didst not sing.

Then 'twas that rhymed remonstrance
  (So famous!) I spake to thee,
Not surely less improving,
Than it was deeply moving,
  And its effect on me

Was wondrously relieving—
  For as my verse flowed on,
Sad thoughts it did beguile,
And for a little while
  My loneliness was gone.

And from that very moment,
Birdie! I do opine,
There has been more in thee
Than common eyes can see—
Or any eyes but mine.

'Tis not because thy music
Is ceaseless now all day
(As many a deafen'd guest
Can ruefully attest)
That thus of thee I say:

But that when night is round us,
And every guest is gone,
And by the taper's beam,
Or fire-light's ruddier gleam,
I'm sitting all alone,

Forth from thy gilded prison,
Soft silvery tones 'gin swell,
More sweet and tender far
Than tenderest warblings are
Of love-lorn Philomel—

And thou, the while, fast perch'd,
As if asleep—so still!
That tremulous under tone,
Liquidly gurgling on,
Like a tiny, tinkling rill.—

And when I watch thee closer,
Small creature! with surprise,
Half doubtful, if from thee
*That* marvellous melody,
*I* meet thy watchful eyes,

Those bright black eyes, so strangely,
  Methinks, that answer mine;
It surely seems to me,
Some spirit thou must be,
  Pent in that plumy shrine—

But whether spirit, fairy,
  Or mortal fowl thou art,
I thank thee, pretty creature!
My comforter! my teacher!
  I thank thee from my heart—

My comforter I call thee—
  For many a heavy hour,
Hath lightened of its sadness,
Nay—half attuned to gladness,
  Thy small pipe's witching power.

And often-time while list'ning,
  I've caught th' infectious tone;
And murmur'd fitful words—
And struck a few faint chords,
  Wild music of my own;

Till to the realms of Cloudland,
  Freed Fancy wing'd her flight,
Far, far beneath her leaving
This world of sin and grieving—
  So, Birdie, with good right

My *Comforter* I call thee—
  My *Teacher* thou shouldst be;
For sure some lesson holy,
Of wisdom meek and lowly,
  May reason learn from thee.

Debarr'd from choicest blessings,
Inferior good to prize—
*Thou* hymn'st the light of Heaven,
Though not to thee 'tis given
To soar into the skies.

Content thou art, and thankful,
For some poor gather'd weed;
Though nature's charter'd right
In gardens of delight
Gave thee to sport and feed—

Thou renderest good for evil,
For sad captivity
Sweet music—all thy treasure;—
Oh! Birdie! when I measure
Philosophy with thee,

I feel how much I'm wanting,
Though more is given to me—
That thou, poor soulless creature!
Mayst truly be the teacher
Of proud humanity.

# TO LITTLE MARY.

I'm bidden, little Mary!
To write verses upon thee;
I'd fain obey the bidding
If it rested but with me:
But the Mistresses I'm bound to
(Nine Ladies hard to please)
Of all their stores poetic
So closely keep the keys,
It's only now and then,
By good luck as one may say,
That a couplet or a rhyme or two
Falls fairly in my way.

Fruit forced is never half so sweet
As that comes quite in season—
But some folks must be satisfied
With rhyme in *spite* of reason.
So, Muses! now befriend me,
Albeit of help so chary,
To string the pearls of poesie
For loveliest Little Mary.

And yet, ye pagan Damsels!
Not over fond am I
T' invoke your haughty favours,

Your fount of Castaly.
I've sipt a purer fountain,
I've deck'd a holier shrine,
I own a mightier Mistress—
O Nature! *Thou* art mine.
And Feeling's fount than Castaly
Yields waters more divine!

And only to that well-head,
Sweet Mary! I'll resort,
For just an artless verse or two,
A simple strain and short,
Befitting well a Pilgrim
Wayworn with earthly strife,
To offer thee, young Traveller!
In the morning track of life.

There's many a one will tell thee
'Tis all with roses gay—
There's many a one will tell thee
'Tis thorny all the way—
Deceivers are they every one,
Dear Child! who thus pretend;
God's ways are *not* unequal—
Make *Him* thy trusted friend,
And many a path of plesantness
He'll clear away for thee,
However dark and intricate
The labyrinth may be.

I need not wish thee beauty—
I need not wish thee grace—
Already both are budding
In that infant form and face.

I *will not* wish thee grandeur—
I *will not* wish thee wealth—
But only a contented heart,
Peace—competence—and health—
Fond friends to love thee dearly,
And honest friends to chide,
And faithful ones to cleave to thee,
Whatever may betide.

And now, my little Mary!
If better things remain,
Unheeded in my blindness,
Unnoticed in my strain,
I'll sum them up succinctly,
In "English undefiled,"
My Mother tongue's best benison,—
God bless thee—precious Child!

# THE HEDGEHOG.

Some carping, cross-grained souls there be
(Male specimens are *not* the rarest)
Will split you half a hair in two
In argument; to prove *green blue*,
Or *this* not *that*—or *truth* not *true*,
When it shines fairest.

'Twould wear the patience of a saint,
A Job, a Grizzel, all to tatters,
One of those wearying wights to hear
Harp-harping on for half-a-year
(His motto's always "persevere")
Anent such matters.

But, if you prize an hour of peace
(We'll just suppose, Ma'am! he's your Sposo),
Be cautious how you make pretence
To pose him with superior sense,
Or airs of calm indifference,
Play "grandioso."

*That* way won't do—believe me, twon't—
You might as well oppose a river;
*Or*—after fighting very hard,
*If you do* take him off his guard,

And get the best on't—mark my word,
You're lost for ever.

To be convinced he's in the wrong!—
That all his manly wit's been wasted!—
To prove *himself* a goose!—and *you*
An oracle! and to eschew
Your meekly Christian triumph too!—
More bitter dose—(that dose you'll rue)—
Man never tasted.

And it's by no means *very* safe
Always to suffer, like a martyr,
In silent sweetness,—or to yield,
At the first onset, sword and shield;
He'd rather you'd defend the field,
And woman's charter,

Or there's an end of his enjoyment!—
He *can't* talk on without an answer
From morn till night!—But have a care
How far you venture with your share
O' th' argument;—a nice affair
T' engage Drawcansir!

But there *are* methods.—Just look here,
Observe this odd, brown bunch of thistles;
Touch where you will the living ball—
(For *'tis alive!*—'twill eat and crawl!)—
Its rusty coat is guarded all
With thick black bristles!

Well! will you try your naked grasp
*To clutch* the crabbed creature firm in,

And all his charms unfold to view ?
Handle him gently—*That* won't do—
Boldly—he'll prick your fingers through—
"Deuce take the vermin!"

Come, come—we've other ways. Let's set
This cream down by the churlish villain—
Ah! ha!—how soon he smells it out!
Look, there's a paw! and there's a snout!
An's all unrolled now! Liq'rish lout!
See how he's swilling!

And all his bristles laid so smooth!
Well, what a change! who could have thought it ?
He's really (for a hedgehog) pleasing;
'Twas neither tenderness nor teasing,
But that good cream he's over seas in,
To pass that brought it.

And to effect such change benign
In *human Hedgehog*—saint or sinner—
To smooth his bristles—soothe his rage—
There's not an argument so sage,
Or so prevailing, I'll engage,
As a good dinner.

# TO MY LITTLE COUSIN, WITH HER FIRST BONNET.

Fairies! guard the baby's bonnet—
Set a special watch upon it:
Elfin people! to your care
I commit it, fresh and fair;
Neat as neatness, white as snow—
See ye make it ever so.

Watch and ward set all about,
Some within and some without;
Over it, with dainty hand,
One her kirtle green expand;
One take post at every ring;
One at each unwrinkled string;
Two or three about the bow
Vigilant concern bestow;
A score, at least, on either side,
'Gainst evil accident provide
(Jolt, or jar, or overlay);
And so the precious charge convey
Through all the dangers of the way

But when those are batled through,
Fairies! more remains to do.
Ye must gift, before ye go,
The bonnet and the Babe also—
Gift it to protect her well,
Fays! from all malignant spell,

Charms and seasons to defy,
Blighting winds and evil eye.

And the bonny Babe! on her
All your choicest gifts confer;—
Just as much of wit and sense
As may be hers without pretence—
Just as much of grace and beauty,
As shall not interfere with duty—
Just as much of sprightliness,
As may companion gentleness—
Just as much of firmness, too,
As with self-will hath nought to do—
Just as much light-hearted cheer,
As may be melted to a tear—
By a word—a tone—a look—
Pity's touch, or Love's rebuke—
As much of frankness, sweetly free,
As may consort with modesty—
As much of feeling, as will bear
Of after life the wear and tear—
As much of life——But, but Fairies! there
Ye vanish into thinnest air;
And with ye parts the playful vein
That loved a light and trivial strain.
Befits me better, Babe! for thee
T' invoke Almighty agency—
Almighty love—Almighty power
To nurture up the human flower;
To cherish it with heavenly dew,
Sustain with earthly blessings too;
And when the ripe full time shall be,
*Engraft* it on Eternity.

# ON THE REMOVAL OF SOME FAMILY PORTRAITS.

SILENT friends! fare ye well—
Shadows! adieu.
Living friends long I've lost,
Now I lose you.

Bitter tears many I've shed,
Ye've seen them flow;
Dreary hours many I've sped,
Full well ye know.

Yet in my loneliness,
Kindly, methought,
Still ye look'd down on me,
Mocking me not,

With light speech and hollow words,
Grating so sore
The sad heart, with many ills
Sick to the core.

Then, if my clouded skies
Brighten'd awhile,
Seem'd your soft serious eyes
Almost to smile.

Silent friends! fare ye well—
Shadows! adieu
Living friends long I've lost,
Now I lose you.

Taken from hearth and board,
When all were gone;
I look'd up at you, and felt
Not quite alone.

Not quite companionless,
While in each face
Met me familiar
The stamp of my race.

Thine, gentle ancestress!
Dove-eyed and fair,
Melting in sympathy
Oft for my care.

Grim Knight and stern visaged!
Yet could I see
(Smoothing that furrowed face)
Good-will to me.

Bland looks were beaming
Upon me I knew,
Fair sir!—bonnie lady!—
From you, and from you.

Little think happy ones,
Heart-circled round,
*How* fast to senseless things
Hearts may be bound;

How, when the living prop's
Moulder'd and gone,
Heart-strings, low trailing left,
Clasp the cold stone.

Silent friends! fare ye well—
Shadows! adieu.
Living friends long I've lost,
Now I lose you.

Often when spirit-vex'd,
Weary and worn,
To your quiet faces, mute
Friends, would I turn.

Soft as I gazed on them,
Soothing as balm,
Lulling the passion-storm,
Stole your deep calm—

Till, as I longer look'd,
Surely methought,
Ye read and replied to
My questioning thought.

"Daughter," ye softly said—
"Peace to thine heart:
We too—yes, daughter! have
Been as thou art,

"Toss'd on the troubled waves,
Life's stormy sea;
Chance and change manifold
Proving like thee.

"Hope-lifted—doubt-depressed—
Seeing in part—
Tried—troubled—tempted—
*Sustained* as thou art—

"*Our* God is *thy* God—what He
Willeth is best—
Trust him as we trusted: then
Rest, as we rest."

Silent friends! fare ye well—
Shadows! adieu—
*One friend* abideth still
*All* changes through.

# OUR OLD HOUSE CLOCK.

Old friend! that many a long year through
(Dog-days and all), in brown surtout,
Hath stood ensconced, with wintriest look,
I' th' warmest side o' the chimney-nook—
That standeth still i' the self-same place,
With that same cool composed face,—
(Few, by the way, 'mongst human creatures,
Made up of more expressive features),
Nor e'er in all that weary while,
Hath utter'd plaint of durance vile—
In that stiff garment all of oak,
Thy sentry-box—of heat or smoke;
Of task perpetual—(worse than mighty)
Monotonous—of tædium vitæ—
Of false reflections on thy truth,
From weary age—impatient youth,
Of Time's deliver'd message, scorned
Or heeded not by those thou'st warned.

All these, and other ills in turn
"That *clocks* are heirs to," hast thou borne
With patience most exemplary—
No peevish frown, or look awry,
Marring the placid, polished grace
Of that smooth, broad, reflecting face

That shineth still (example rare
To mortal dames) as smooth and fair,
As first, some threescore years agone,
To the admiring light it shone.

Yet I, who've known thee long and well,
Could of some prison secrets tell—
How all unseen by mortal eye,
In darkness and in mystery,
When all the house at dead midnight
Is hushed and still—like tortured sprite,
Deep hollow murmurs—long-drawn groans
Thou utterest, and unearthly tones,
Such as if heard by silly ear
Of simple Joan, she quakes for fear,
Shrinks down beneath the bed-clothes deep,
And pants and prays herself to sleep.

Old friend! I've listened many a night,
To those strange murmurs with affright
Unmoved, or superstitious dread,
Yet, as to utterings from the dead—
Low mystic groanings—sounds of doom
Deep-voiced, up-issuing from the tomb—
And then methought 'twas *Time's own* tongue,
Not thine, that solemn dirge that sung
For generations swept away—
For ages gathered to decay.
But Fancy from her loftier range
Descending soon—a milder change
Came o'er my spirit, that full fain
To thy familiar voice again
Gave ear, discoursing sad, sweet sighs
*Over the* heart's own memories.

Sweet memories of that blissful time,
Life's dayspring! lovelier than its prime,
When, with the bird on summer morn
That carolled earliest from the thorn,
I was awake, and singing too,
And gathering wild-flowers wet with dew,
Till summoned home, old friend! by thee
(Far-echoing down our cowslip lea)
To the dear breakfast board, I came
With scattered curls and cheek of flame
All glowing from the fresh wind's kiss,
One to receive of purer bliss—
What was the balmied morn's caressing
To that best balm—a Parent's blessing?

And when the winter evening long
Closed round us, and the cricket's song
Clicked from the clean-swept hearth, where Di
Stretched yawning out, luxuriously—
The heavy curtains dropt—thrown on
The hoarded log—the tea-things gone—
The candles trimmed and bright—and we
(A silent, not *unsocial* three)
In our warm parlour snug together,
Little cared we for winter weather.

There sat my mother—on that chair,
Intent on book or work; and there
(Just opposite) my Father sate,
Poring o'er task elaborate,
All redolent—(his angler's books)—
Of summer time, green fields, and brooks—
Arrangement finically nice!
Snares of all pattern; each device—

Insects, with such ingenious art
Copied from nature, every part
So perfected with curious skill,
You only wondered they were still.
Proud was my Father's little maid,
His nestling neighbour, when the aid
Of her small fingers was required—
(What ministry like Love's unhired ?)
And young sharp eyes, some hair so fine,
Some feathery filament to twine
In cunning knot, that, deftly wrought,
Must be invisible as thought ;
The service done, a kind hand pressed
Her up-turned brow, and she was blessed ;

And soon, old friend ! thy sober tone
Telling her happy day was done,
Down kneeling at the mother's knee,
Hands clasped, and eyes raised reverently,
The simple prayer was simply said,
The kiss exchanged—and so to bed.
Not soon to sleep—for fancies vain
Crept oft into that busy brain,
At that lone hour. Some light and gay,
Of birds and flower—of toys and play :
Ambitious some—of bold essay
At lofty rhyme—conceptions grand
Of giants, dwarfs, and fairy land ;
Or elegy on favourite bird,
Dormouse, or lamb (first griefs that stirred
The deep, deep, source !)—and some of fear,
As all in darkness, on the ear
Smote hollow sounds. Hark ! hark ! and then
How the heart throbbed !—and there again !

What could it be?—a groan—a knock—
"Oh dear! 'tis only the old Clock."

Then, simple child, thy witless head,
With happy sigh, sank back in bed,
And ere revolved the minute hand,
The soul was in the "dreaming land."
Oh! days, of all I ever knew
The happiest—ay, the wisest too,
In that sweet wisdom of the heart,
Our fallen nature's better part—
That lingering of primeval light,
Not yet all sunk in sin and night.

'Twill be renewed that blessed time!
'Twill be renewed that loveliest prime;
Renewed, when we again shall be
Children around the Father's knee
Of one immortal family!
Our portion each—(no more to part)—
Angelic wisdom—childlike heart.
Ah! wandering thoughts—ye've stolen away
From this dark prison-house of clay;
From earth to heaven! a pleasant track!
Too pleasant to be trodden back
Without a sigh. But, ancient friend!
Not here our colloquy must end—
Thy part therein I freely own
Subordinate; an undertone
Of modest bass. But thou art one
Too sober, serious, and sedate,
To be much given to idle prate—
So, to thy grave concerns attend,
And let me talk. Ah, honest friend!

Sparing and measured though thy speech,
What eloquent sermons dost thou preach
When the heart listens. Wo is me
If profitless such listening be.

"But to my chronicles." Full well
Was thy watch kept, old sentinel!
Full well thine endless duty done—
While fluttering on from sun to sun,
A butterfly among the flowers,
I noted not the passing hours.
Till the rain fell, the storm beat sore,
And that sweet summer dream was o'er.
Then first, old friend! thy voice to me
Sounded with sad solemnity;
The tones upon my heart that fell
Deep mingled with a passing bell
Since then, through many a checkered scene
Of good and ill my path hath been—
The good—a gleam not long to last;
The evil—widely overcast.
But still to thee in many a mood,
By night—by day—in solitude,
Or circled round—in hope or fear,
Hath turned my long-awakened ear
As to an oracle, that spoke
More than the time-dividing stroke.
Oh! gladsome to my soul, thy sound,
Heard wakening first from sleep profound
(Youth's *light deep* slumber) the first morn,
After long absence, of return
To my dear home—Oh, happiness!
To lie in blissful consciousness

Of all around: The picture there—
The books—the flower-glass filled with care
By a kind hand—And then to know,
'Twas but to rise, and meet below
Such a heart's welcome!
Wo is me,
The sweet and bitter memory
Of that old time! of those bright wakings!
Followed by some—ah! sore heart-breakings,
Leaving a wreck of youthful feeling
Beyond the reach of Time's own healing.

But though all powerless evermore
Life's young illusions to restore—
(Beautiful dreams!) the wise one brought,
In kind exchange, awakened thought,
Awakened seriousness; and Hope
That, crushed below, took higher scope—
Yea heavenly—for her after-flight.
Then, in the watches of the night,
With mine own heart while communing,
Friend! 'twas a sadly *pleasing* thing
To hear thee tell how Time went on,
And how another hour was gone.
The earthly hopeful, little care
To heed how swift Time's pinions are—
But they attend with willing ear
Who must make their heart's home here.

Yet, faithful watchman! time hath been
In more than one late after scene,
That, list'ning to thy voice, I've said,
"Oh! would that restless tongue were staid."

I've said so—weak and selfish heart!
When time drew near that I must part
With some beloved, whose sojourn here
Might have made sunshine all the year;
Whose presence for a little day
Chased half the wintry clouds away.

I've thought so—weak and sinful heart!
When some were summon'd to depart—
Call'd from their labours here to cease,
The full of days, faith, hope, and peace,
Who long had linger'd here in pain;
My loss in them their countless gain—
Yet with long watching, worn and low,
Too soul-opprest for tears to flow;
When the deep hush of night and death
Was in the house—and every breath
From those dear lips the *last* might be;
A shudd'ring ear I've turn'd from thee,
Watchman! whose every minute stroke,
On fever'd nerves o'erstrained, broke
As if a leaden, pond'rous blow
Fell on some hollow vault below—
"Oh! for an hour," I could have pray'd,
"Stern reckoner! that thy tongue were staid."

These things are past. Of hopes and fears,
The current now, with length'ning years
Flows narrowing in a deeper bed,
No spark of early feeling fled,
But all subdued and chastened—
Too little yet. The Christian strife
Can finish but with finish'd life—

The spirit may be all resign'd,
Yet inly bleed—The willing mind
Too oft may faint—The hopeful eye
Sink rayless in despondency;
But *one* who reads the secret heart
In all its griefs can take a part—
Can pity all its weakness too—
For He who ne'er corruption knew
Nor sin, hath yet our nature borne
And hung at woman's breast—
And he hath said—Oh! words that calm
The troubled heart with holiest balm,—
"Come unto me, ye travel-worn!
And I will give you rest."

# THE CHILD'S UNBELIEF.

"Come hither, my little Child! to me,
Come hither and hearken now.
My poor, poor Child! is this a day
For thee to dance, and sport, and play,
Like blossom on the bough?

"Fair blossom! where's the fostering bough?
And where's the parent tree?
Stem, root, and branch—all, all laid low;
Almost at once—at one fell blow:
Dear Child! cling close to me,

"(My Sister's Child!) for thou shalt grow
Into my very heart:
But hush that ringing laugh—to me
The silver sound is agony;
Come, hearken here apart,

"And fold thy little hands in mine,
Thus standing at my knee;
And look up in my face, and say—
Dost thou remember what, to-day,
Weeping, I told to thee?

"Alas! my tears are raining fast
Upon thine orphan head;
And thy sweet eyes are glistening now——
Harry! at last, believest thou
That thy poor mother's dead?"

"No, no, my mother *is not* dead—
She *can't* be dead, you know:
Oh aunt! I saw my father die,
All white and cold I saw him lie—
My mother don't *look so*.

"She cried when I was sent away,
And I cried very much;
And she was pale, and hung her head,
But all the while her lips were red,
And soft and warm to touch.

"Not like my father's—hard and cold——
And then *she said*, beside,
She'd come to England soon, you know."
"But, Harry! that was months ago—
She sickened since and died;

"And the sad news is come to-day,
Told in *this* letter. See,
'Tis edged and sealed with black."—"Oh! dear,
Give me that pretty seal. Look, here
I'll keep it carefully,

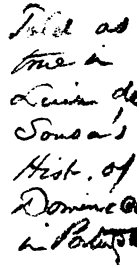
"With all these others, in my box—
They're all for her. Don't cry,
I'll learn my lessons every day,
That I may have them all to say
When she comes by and by."

"Boy! boy! thy talk will break my heart—
Oh Nature! can it be
That thou in his art silent so?—
Yet what, poor infant! shouldst thou know
Of life's great mystery?

"Of time and space—of chance and change—
Of sin, decay, and death:
What canst thou know, thou sinless one!
Thou yet unstained, unbreathed upon
By this world's tainting breath?

"A sunbeam all thy little life!
Thy very being bliss—
Glad creature! who would waken thee
To sense of sin and misery
From such a dream as this?"

# THE LEGEND OF SANTAREM.



COME listen to a monkish tale of old,
Right Catholic, but puerile some may deem,
Who all unworthy their high notice hold
Aught but grave truth, or lofty learned theme;
Too wise for simple fancies, smiles, and tears,
Dreams of our earliest, purest, happiest years.

Come—listen to my legend; for of them
Surely thou art not: and to thee I'll tell
How on a time in holiest Santarem
Strange accident miraculous befell
Two little ones; who to the sacred shrine
Came daily to be schooled in things divine.

Twin Sisters—orphan innocents were they:
Most pure I ween, from all but the olden taint,
Which only Jesu's blood can wash away:
And holy, as the life of holiest saint,
Was his, that good Dominican's, who fed
His master's lambs, with more than daily bread.

The Children's custom, while that pious man
Performed the various duties of his state
Within the spacious church, as Sacristan,
Was on the altar steps to sit and wait,
Nestling together ('twas a lovely sight!)
Like the young turtle doves of Hebrew rite.

A small rich chapel was their sanctuary,
While thus abiding;—with adornment fair
Of curious carved work, wrought cunningly,
In all quaint patterns, and devices rare:
And over them, above the altar, smiled
From Mary-Mother's arms, the holy child.

Smiled on his infant guests, as there below,
On the fair altar steps, those young ones spread
—(Nor aught irreverent in such act I trow)
Their simple morning meal of fruit and bread.
Such feast not ill beseemed the sacred dome—
Their father's house is the dear children's home.

At length it chanced, upon a certain day,
When Frey Bernardo to the chapel came,
Where patiently was ever wont to stay
His infant charge; with vehement acclaim,
Both lisping creatures forth to meet him ran,
And each to tell the same strange tale began.

"Father!" they cried, as hanging on his gown
On either side, in each perplexed ear
They poured their eager tidings—"He came down—
Menino Jesu has been with us here!—
We asked him to partake our fruit and bread;
And he came down—and sate with us—and fed."—

"Children! my children! know ye what ye say?"
Bernardo hastily replied—"But hold!—
Peace, Briolanja!—rash art thou alway:
Let Inez speak." And little Inez told,
In her slow silvery speech, distinctly o'er,
*The same* strange tidings he had heard before.

"Blessed are ye, my children!" with devout
And deep humility the good man cried—
"Ye have been highly favoured. Still to doubt
Were gross impiety and sceptic pride.
Ye have been highly favoured. Children, dear!
Now your old master's loving counsel hear.

"Return to-morrow with the morning light,
And as before, spread out your simple fare
On the same table; and again invite
Menino Jesu to descend and share:
And if he come, say—'Bid us, blessed Lord!
We and our master, to thy heavenly board.'

"Forget not, children of my soul! to plead
For your old master:—Even for *his* sake
Who fed ye faithfully: and he will heed
Your innocent lips; and I shall so partake
With his dear lambs.—Beloved, with the sun
Return to-morrow.—Then—His will be done."

"To-night! to-night! Menino Jesu saith
We shall sup with him, Father! we and thee,"
Cried out both happy children in a breath
As the good Father entered anxiously
About the morrow's noon, that Holy Shrine,
Now consecrate by special grace divine.

"He bade us come alone; but then we said
We could not, without thee, our Master dear—
At that, he did not frown, but shook his head
Denyingly: Then straight with many a tear
We prayed so sore, he could not but relent,
And so, he smiled at last, and gave consent."

"Now, God be praised!" the old man said, and fell
In prayer upon the marble floor straightway,
His face to Earth: And so, till Vesper bell,
Entranced in the spirit's depths he lay;
Then rose like one refreshed with wine, and stood
Composed among th' assembling Brotherhood.

The mass was said; the evening chaunt was o'er;
Hushed its long echoes through the lofty dome:
And now Bernardo knew the appointed hour
That he had prayed for, of a truth was come.
Alone he lingered in the solemn pile,
Where darkness gathered fast from aisle to aisle;

Except, that through a distant door-way streamed
One slanting sunbeam, gliding whereupon
Two angel spirits—(so in sooth it seemed
That loveliest vision)—hand in hand came on,
With noiseless motion. "Father! we are here,"
Sweetly saluted the good Father's ear.

A hand he laid on each fair sun-bright head,
Rayed like a seraph's with effulgent light,
And—"Be ye blest, ye blessed ones," he said,
"Whom Jesu bids to his own board to-night—
Lead on, ye chosen, to th' appointed place
Lead your old master." So, with steadfast face,

He followed, where those young ones led the way
To that small chapel—like a golden clue
Streamed on before that long bright sunset ray,
Till at the door it stopt. Then passing through,
*The master* and the pupils, side by side,
*Knelt down* in prayer before the Crucified.

Tall tapers burnt before the holy shrine;
Chalice and paten on the altar stood,
Spread with fair damask. Of the crimson wine
Partaking first alone; the living food
Bernardo next with his dear children shared—
Young lips, but well for heavenly food prepared.

And there we leave them. Not for us to see
The feast made ready, that first act to crown;
Nor to peruse the solemn mystery
Of the divine Menino's coming down
To lead away th' elect, expectant three,
With him that night, at his own board to be.

Suffice it, that with him they surely were
That night in Paradise; for those who came
Next to the chapel found them as in prayer,
Still kneeling—stiffened every lifeless frame,
With hands and eyes upraised as when they died,
Toward the image of the Crucified.

That mighty miracle spread far and wide,
And thousands came the feast of death to see;
And all beholders, deeply edified,
Returned to their own homes more thoughtfully,
Musing thereon: with one great truth imprest—
That "to depart and be with Christ is best."

# THE RIVER.

River! River! little River!
Bright you sparkle on your way,
O'er the yellow pebbles dancing,
Through the flowers and foliage glancing,
Like a child at play.

River! River! swelling River!
On you rush o'er rough and smooth—
Louder, faster, brawling, leaping
Over rocks, by rose-banks sweeping,
Like impetuous youth.

River! River! brimming River!
Broad and deep and *still* as Time,
Seeming *still*—yet still in motion,
Tending onward to the ocean,
Just like mortal prime.

River! River! rapid River!
Swifter now you slip away;
Swift and silent as an arrow,
Through a channel dark and narrow,
Like life's closing day.

River! River! headlong River!
Down you dash into the sea;
Sea, that line hath never sounded,
Sea, that voyage hath never rounded,
Like eternity.

# TO THE LADY-BIRD.

"LADY-BIRD! Lady-bird! fly away home"—
The field-mouse is gone to her nest,
The daisies have shut up their sleepy red eyes,
And the bees and the birds are at rest.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away home—
The glow-worm is lighting her lamp,
The dew's falling fast, and your fine speckled wings
Will flag with the close clinging damp.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away home—
Good luck if you reach it at last:
The owl's come abroad, and the bat's on the roam,
Sharp-set from their Ramazan fast.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away home—
The fairy bells tinkle afar,
Make haste, or they'll catch ye, and harness ye fast,
With a cobweb, to Oberon's car.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away home—
But, as all serious people do, first
*Clear* your conscience, and settle your worldly affairs,
*And so* be prepared for the worst.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! make a short shrift—
  Here's a hair-shirted Palmer hard by;
And here's Lawyer Earwig to draw up your v
  And we'll witness it, Death-Moth and I.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! don't make a fuss—
  You've mighty small matters to give;
Your coral and jet, and—there, there—you can tack
  A codicil on, if you live.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away now
  To your house, in the old willow-tree,
Where your children, so dear, have invited the ant,
  And a few cozy neighbours to tea.

Lady-bird! Lady-bird! fly away home,
  And if not gobbled up by the way,
Nor yoked by the fairies to Oberon's car,
  You're in luck—and that's all I've to say.

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